

Glenn Rupp

Page, U.S. House of Representatives (1932–1936)

**Oral History Interviews
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Abstract

Glenn Rupp’s remarkable memory of his life as a House Page from 1932–1936, provides important insights about a variety of topics. His recollections of the daily activities of Pages and of special events, such as the annual dinners hosted by Representative Joseph Shannon of Missouri, are a personal record of the work and pastimes of the House Pages. In addition, his detailed descriptions of the Speaker’s Lobby and the Democratic Cloakroom—in terms of both architecture and atmosphere—allow comparisons of the House in the 1930s with the institution today. Rupp’s recollections of the mundane (paging a Member), unusual (helping to apprehend an intruder on the House Floor), special (FDR’s first inauguration and State of the Union address), and unfamiliar (the “Little Congress”), provide a vivid and dynamic picture of the Members, congressional employees, and the institution of the era, enhancing the history of the U.S. House.

Biography

Born in Archbold, Ohio, on October 30, 1912, Glenn Rupp received an invitation from Representative Frank Kniffin of Ohio, a family friend, to serve as a Page for the U.S. House of Representatives. Eager to find employment during the Great Depression, Rupp accepted the patronage position and began working at the Capitol in January 1932. During his first year on the Hill, he worked on the House Floor as a Democratic Page, primarily running errands for Representatives, filing copies of the Congressional Record, and obtaining bills from the document room.

Beginning in January 1933, Rupp served as a doorkeeper for the east lobby of the House Chamber. As one of the Pages responsible for guarding entry to the House Floor, he had to memorize the names and faces of all the Members of Congress. He also paged Representatives off the floor to meet Senators, Cabinet members, congressional secretaries, and reporters. Another one of Rupp’s responsibilities as a Page was to train the future Representative, Senator, and President Lyndon B. Johnson as a House doorkeeper.

During his four and one-half years as a House Page, Rupp attended presidential inaugurations, Joint Sessions, and national conventions. Due to his lengthy tenure on the Hill, he became acquainted with many Members, including the four Speakers of the House who served between 1932 and 1936: John Garner, Henry Rainey, Joseph Byrns, and William Bankhead. He also witnessed a variety of historic events, such as the World War I Veterans’ Bonus March and the end of Prohibition. Upon ending his career as a Page in July 1936, Rupp worked at the Federal Housing Administration, served in the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II, and became a salesman and manager in the paper industry. After retirement, Rupp resided in Green Valley, Arizona, until his passing on September 3, 2010.

Editing Practices

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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

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Interviewer Biography

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

— GLENN RUPP —
INTERVIEW ONE

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted by phone, with the interviewee and interviewer in Green Valley, Arizona, and Washington, D.C., respectively.

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson interviewing Glenn Rupp, a House Page from 1932 through 1936. This is the first interview with Mr. Rupp, and it is April 27, 2005. Mr. Rupp, I'd like to start off today by asking you some biographical questions, and, first off, if you could tell me when and where were you born.

RUPP: I was born in Williams County, Ohio. That's five miles from Archbold, Ohio, a small town of 2,500 people. And, my mother died when I was six weeks old, so I had gone from the farm to live with my grandparents in town.

JOHNSON: And when were you born? What year?

RUPP: I was born October 30, 1912.

JOHNSON: What was your mother's name?

RUPP: Elma. E-L-M-A. Neidhardt. N-E-I-D-H-A-R-D-T.

JOHNSON: And, what did your mother do for a living?

RUPP: Well, she taught school in a one-room country school. And she also taught music—violin and piano.

JOHNSON: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

RUPP: Yes, I had an older brother. He was a year and a half older than I, and he stayed with an uncle and an aunt until my father remarried five years later.

JOHNSON: What schools did you attend?

RUPP: I attended the country school where I lived, about two miles away. A one-room country school, and I attended Archbold High School, in Archbold, Ohio.

JOHNSON: When did you decide that you were going to become a Page for the U.S. House? How did that come about?

RUPP: I received a letter in the mail from Congressman Frank C. [Charles] Kniffin, K-N-I-F-F-I-N, asking me if I would like to be a Page; he could get me an appointment. And, I wrote and told him I'd be very pleased to take the job.

JOHNSON: And why did he ask you? Was this a person that you knew?

RUPP: Yes, he was a friend of the family's. And, actually, he had attended my high school graduation. I think that I may have given him the idea to appoint me as a Page. I know of no other reason.

JOHNSON: Why did you want to become a Page? What made you so interested in this position?

RUPP: I was through high school, and jobs were hard to get. I knew it'd be difficult to get anything nice. Nobody had any money to go to college, so I jumped at the opportunity to go to Washington, and to become a Page.

JOHNSON: This was during the Depression?

RUPP: Yeah, it was right in the beginning of the Depression. The Depression started in 1929, with the stock market crash, and it just got progressively worse from year to year.

JOHNSON: What did your father do for a living?

RUPP: My father was a farmer. He owned a couple of farms, and he raised grain—corn, wheat, barley, rye—and clover seed.

JOHNSON: Did you help him with farm work?

RUPP: Yes, I did. My brother and I helped him, what little we could do in the beginning.

JOHNSON: And, with becoming a Page, would you be able to describe your recollections of your first day?

RUPP: Well, the first day was January 1, 1932, and I arrived on the floor of the House with the Congressman [Kniffin]. We took the Members' elevator up to the House Floor, and we went on the floor, and he looked at me, and I think I must have had a look of horror on my face, or fright, because I didn't feel comfortable where I was. And, anyway, he said to me, "Glenn, don't

worry about this job. I wouldn't have picked you if I didn't think you could handle it." And that cleared everything; I just went on from there.

JOHNSON: So that gave you the confidence that you needed?

RUPP: I had 100 percent confidence. Just by hearing those good words.

JOHNSON: What else happened on your first day?

RUPP: Well, that was really all. We came back the next day as the Congress convened, and the Speaker struck the gavel and said, "The House will come to order, the Chaplain will offer prayer," and we took it from there. I was in the back of the room, on a Page bench, ready to do anything that was asked of me.

JOHNSON: When you came to Washington, did you know anyone besides Congressman Kniffin?

RUPP: No, I met his brother, his younger brother. And I met his two secretaries. I rode to Washington, actually, with his secretary, Dan Batt. I got to know him quite well. But everybody else was new to me.

JOHNSON: When did you get to meet the other House Pages?

RUPP: I met them on January 2nd, of '32.

JOHNSON: How many Pages were there, about how many House Pages? Do you remember?

RUPP: Well, we always understood that there were 40 Pages in the United States House of Representatives. Forty or 42, I think it was. And 26 in the Senate. And four in the Supreme Court. About 20 of us worked on the House Floor. We either worked on the Democratic side or the Republican side. And the Doorkeeper assigned us to the side where we would work, and he selected me to be on the Democratic side.

JOHNSON: Who was the Doorkeeper at the time?

RUPP: Joe Sinnott. S-I-N-N-O-T-T.

JOHNSON: He selected you to go to the Democratic side. Was this random or did you have a choice on which side you wanted to work on?

RUPP: No, no. We didn't. He just said, "Here's where you go." And that's where we went.

JOHNSON: What was the average age of the Pages at the time?

RUPP: Oh, we had some, a few, that were quite young, maybe 14 to 16, 17, and quite a number of us were graduates of high school at that time.

JOHNSON: And, just to backtrack a little bit, after you graduated high school, did you go straight to Washington, D.C., or did you have some time in between in Ohio?

RUPP: I had time in between, when I worked with my father, on the farm. Nothing

in between the farm and a Page in the House of Representatives.

JOHNSON: Would you be able to describe an average day as a House Page?

RUPP: I believe so. We arrived on the floor around 9:00 and we always had, as our first assignment, to place the *Congressional Records* in the binder that was underneath the seats. And we did that. And then we proceeded to the back of the room, to the Page bench, to be there as the Congressmen came in, as they wanted to have us do things. Of course, we were available. The overseer of the Pages would assign us to go to the number of the seat that was calling the Page, if he was on the floor. Otherwise, he would come right to the Page bench, and ask us to do whatever he wanted us to do for him.

JOHNSON: You mentioned an overseer? Could you describe that position?

RUPP: Yeah. We had two Page benches, one on either side of the overseer's seat in back of the tracking device that was like a three-foot-square jewel box with lights, and if a Member wanted a Page, he pressed the button on the seat, where he was sitting, and it would reflect back in this tracking device, and we had a card on the device on the bench and the first Page off would take the first call. We'd look at the number that was called, like, it might be 17, or 29, or whatever. And we'd know exactly what row to go to, and what seat the Member would be sitting in.

JOHNSON: And, there was a particular Page who was an overseer? Is that correct?

RUPP: Yes. It was really one of the senior Pages who was appointed overseer. There was also a chief Page, and this was, of course, on both the Democratic side

and the Republican side.

JOHNSON: Could you give a little more detail? What did the overseer do? What were his responsibilities?

RUPP: Well, he would sit back in his chair, behind this tracking device, and record all the numbers, or tell the first Page on the bench to his left, to get number so-and-so, or whatever it was, wherever we had to go, and then, if a Member came up, he would ask us to do something, and it was usually the overseer that assigned us to the task at hand.

JOHNSON: Did he have any responsibilities off the floor of the House?

RUPP: That was his sole responsibility.

JOHNSON: You mentioned also that there were chief Pages. What did they do?

RUPP: Well, they were in charge of the overseer. And, generally speaking, in charge of everybody back in the Page bench area. He saw that everything went well and the way it should.

JOHNSON: Who was your chief Page while you were on the Hill?

RUPP: James Roher. R-O-H-E-R. His brother-in-law was Congressman Charles [Franklin] West of Granville, Ohio.

JOHNSON: And so, he was the chief Page for the four years that you were there?

RUPP: For the Democratic side.

JOHNSON: Was he a lot older than you were?

RUPP: Yes, he was—probably been 20 or 30, 20 or 25 years older.

JOHNSON: I think it was John McCabe on the Republican side?

RUPP: That is correct! How did you know that?

JOHNSON: I did a little bit of research.

RUPP: You sure did! He was from Indiana.

JOHNSON: So, that leads me to another question. Was there any sort of interaction between the Democratic Pages and the Republican Pages?

RUPP: Actually, there was not any communication whatsoever. We were busy on our respective sides, and did whatever the job called for, and we paid no attention to the opposite side of the room. And vice versa.

JOHNSON: And did that go for when you weren't working as well, or did you socialize with one another?

RUPP: Well, we didn't. When the House adjourned, we left the chamber. That was the end of it. We left when the Congressmen left.

JOHNSON: Were most of your friends at the time Republican Pages, or did you mingle

when you would go out and you wouldn't be working? If you went to the movies or did something?

RUPP: Well, I really don't know, at that time I was always under the impression that the majority party had all the patronage, and I happened to be Republican, as was my family, and all my relatives. But the Congressman was a Democrat. So, he appointed me as a friend, not as a political friend.

JOHNSON: But what kind of friends did you have while you were a Page? Were they mostly people that you worked with? Were they mostly your fellow Pages?

RUPP: Yes, that's correct.

JOHNSON: And, what kinds of things did you do when you weren't working?

RUPP: Oh, we went to the theater. And went around Washington, did sightseeing. Different things like that. Getting acquainted with each other. And with our environment, I suppose you might say. I spent time in the Congressman's office, also. When I wasn't on duty.

JOHNSON: With Congressman Kniffin?

RUPP: Yes. That's correct.

JOHNSON: While you were a Page, where did you live?

RUPP: I lived right across the street from the Old House Office Building [now the Cannon House Office Building]. It was either 1st or 2nd and C Streets

Southeast. And the buildings are probably torn down now. They were row houses, and the Congressman took me and his younger brother, who was a messenger in the post office, over to a boarding house and got our meals and stayed there, and went to work from there, and went back and forth.

JOHNSON: It was the two of you? Were there any other Pages that lived in that boarding house?

RUPP: No, not in our boarding house. Just the two of us. One Page, and one messenger in the post office.

JOHNSON: Do you know where the other Pages lived? Just in various boarding houses?

RUPP: Just like we were, yes. Some of them were sons of a Congressman, and, of course, they lived at home. And then some of them were nephews, and they may have lived with a Congressman. I don't know.

JOHNSON: Okay. So, you were on the older range of the Pages that were working in the House at the time.

RUPP: That's correct.

JOHNSON: Do you think you had any special responsibilities or different assignments since you were older than some of the other Pages?

RUPP: I don't think so. Not particularly the first year. After the first year, yes. I did everything that everybody else did.

JOHNSON: So, the first year, you were primarily on the floor?

RUPP: That's correct.

JOHNSON: And then where did you go from there?

RUPP: I was selected by the Doorkeeper to work on the Speaker's Lobby door. That's the main entrance to the House Floor used by Congressmen when they come over from the House Office Building to the floor, or when they come in for a roll call, [special] order, whatever it might be. And the newspaper reporters all came in there, too. So, it was the most busy place of all of them, and you had to really know every Congressman by sight, by name, by party, and his various idiosyncrasies—what committee he was on, and all that sort of thing. And then we would page the Congressmen off the floor for up to 500 different reporters in the House Press Gallery that were registered and up there. They would come down in droves to ask for Congressmen. And we had two doorkeepers, and two Pages worked on the door. And, they were the ones that really knew everybody. I made it a point to—and I just happened to do this—I'd never used a pencil, I never wrote down a name or anything, of anyone; I just heard it once, and I seemed to remember it. And, that's the reason I was out there.

JOHNSON: Because you had such a great memory?

RUPP: Well, I think so.

JOHNSON: It sounds like you had a very good memory.

RUPP: Well, I did.

JOHNSON: And still do.

RUPP: Well, I do pretty well.

JOHNSON: And so, this was during your second year, that you rose to this position?

RUPP: Yes, I stayed on that door four more years. Four years altogether. And I stayed around there because I was hoping—I liked working so well, in the House of Representatives, that I was very hopeful of getting some kind of promotion all the way to Doorkeeper. The Doorkeeper, Joe Sinnott, was an older man, and he stayed on the job—incidentally, he once was a Page himself, from Virginia. Many years before I was. So, nothing new turned up or became available. That's the reason I stayed in the House as long as I did.

JOHNSON: What was your salary when you were a House Page?

RUPP: Our salary was \$120 a month. Or \$4 a day, for the number of days in the month, and that had to take care of our lodging, our eating, our dry cleaning, our laundry, spending money, and everything else. That was it. And it was a lot of money at that time. We got by, because we lived in a boarding house. Most of us.

JOHNSON: Did your salary increase while you were working there?

RUPP: Not one iota. And, later in the year, of the first year, when [Herbert] Hoover was President, they passed the National Economy Act, where all salaries were

reduced for federal government employees by 15 percent. Senators and Congressmen got \$8,500 a year. And we got \$3.60. But that only lasted a short time. They realized it wasn't too good for them, so they changed it.

JOHNSON: What did you do when Congress wasn't in session?

RUPP: I would go home and work on the farm. To help my dad.

JOHNSON: Were you homesick when you first came to Washington?

RUPP: Not really. No, it was just fun and a lot of excitement, and a great job. And I enjoyed every minute of it. Never had time to get homesick and I was glad to get away from all the farm work.

JOHNSON: And, you obviously have enthusiasm when you're talking about your job. What were some of the specific parts that you enjoyed so much?

RUPP: Well, I enjoyed everything, whether it was the first year, whether it was going to the document rooms, and getting bills for the Congressmen, or going to [the] Congressional Library, or going on whatever the chore was he wanted done, but we would get assignments like taking Judge [Joseph Jefferson] Mansfield, who was always in a wheelchair—he was a Congressman from Texas—and we would push him; if he was on the floor, he'd ask us to take him to his office. We'd go through the tunnel and take him there, up and down the elevators. And then sometimes we'd get a call to go pick him up, and he was kind of generous; every once in a while, he slipped us a dime. He was grateful.

JOHNSON: He must have appreciated the help.

RUPP: He did. And we were glad to do it, whether he tipped us or not.

And then, we'd get calls to . . . They'd ask us to go places, like, I was asked by Speaker [John Nance] Garner, to go to the White House for him, to see Hoover's private secretary.¹ So he counted out 30¢ in change. The car tokens were four for 30¢ at that time, and he said, "You'll use two tokens to go down there. And Mrs. Garner and I will use the other two tokens to go down to the Washington Hotel," where they lived after Congress adjourned. He refused a limousine and chauffeur when he was Speaker. But he did take the limousine and chauffeur when he was Vice President. Because I was with him, and saw him do it, ride in it a number of times.

JOHNSON: Was that a common occurrence, where you would have to go to the White House?

RUPP: That happened periodically. It wasn't a common, everyday thing, but it happened. We went anywhere they wanted us to go, really. Usually it was to go back to their office and get something, or to go to the Senate and see someone for them, and give them a message or whatever.

JOHNSON: Could you provide a couple of examples of some of the things that you did, that they [Members] would ask you to go retrieve or common things that you did as a Page.

RUPP: Well . . . something unusual and exciting?

JOHNSON: Whatever you like. Something that was usual and then maybe something that was not so common.

RUPP: Well, Bill Bray used to be in charge of the phones on the Democratic side, and then when [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was elected President, why he went to the Postmaster General's office, where he worked, and we'd go down there and deliver different things for him, occasionally. That was one.

One time, Dr. [William Irving] Sirovich, who was a Congressman from New York . . . he was an M.D., and he took me in on the floor, and he had me look up at the Visitors' Gallery, and there was a man sitting there by himself. And he asked me if I knew who he was, and I said, "Yes, I do, it's Eddie Cantor," of the movies and, and radio, and so forth. So, he said, "Go up, and sit with him, and explain to him what is happening on the floor, and then take him through Statuary Hall (the Old House Chamber), show him everything there, the statues and everything, and then take him to the Supreme Court," which was in the Old Senate Chamber, and I did. And then he said, "Take him over to the Senate, up in the gallery, and explain everything that's going on there," and I did. And then he said, "Go over to the dining room, Senate Dining Room." He hoped to get away from whatever he was tied up with at the moment. And he was able to do so. And we met there, and then he took over, and I came back to the House Floor.

Another time, why, Will Rogers was there at the door, and asked me to page a few Congressmen for him, from Oklahoma, which I did. And the head man, Gutzon Borglum, of Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, where the sculptures are, of the Presidents and all, and I'd been paging for him whenever he came to Washington. And he asked to see the Congressmen that

he wanted to talk to, relative to getting their appropriation through for the monument work and so forth.

JOHNSON: Well, those sound like very interesting assignments for you.

RUPP: That's right. And then, Julian Friant, the Undersecretary of Agriculture, I got to know him, and he would come to the lobby door, and asked me to page Congressmen for him. And then, of course, one day—I don't know whether you want me to tell you this or not.

JOHNSON: Go ahead.

RUPP: The Doorkeeper [Joe Sinnott] came to me and said, "We're having a new doorkeeper that's going to work on the door here. I want you to introduce him to everyone, and he'll be working for you." And I said, "Fine." And he said, "Will you do it?" And I said, "Sure, I'll do it. Love to do it." I said, "Who is he? What's his name?" He said, "Lyndon [Baines] Johnson." I said, "Lyndon Johnson?" I said, "I've known him since he arrived in Washington." So he came and worked the rest of the session on the door with me. And I took him on the floor, and introduced him to Congressmen, and went up and down each aisle, seat, told him who they were, introduced him to the reporters, and a lot of things like that.

JOHNSON: So, you took him under your wing then.

RUPP: That's right. But he was still secretary to Dick [Richard Mifflin] Kleberg, [Sr.], of King's Ranch in Texas. And the doorkeeper that he succeeded was L. E. Jones. I don't even know his first name. He never told us. And he went to

Texas to law school, and I think his salary followed him, and Johnson worked for nothing as a congressional secretary doing other duties. That's just between you and everybody else. Because he was just . . . you know how those things happen.

JOHNSON: And you said that you already knew Johnson.

RUPP: Oh, yeah! We belonged to the Little Congress [Club], which was an organization started in, many years ago, and, I think . . . 1929 or something. Way back. And they were mostly congressional secretaries, but there were Pages, and there were doorkeepers, and there were elevator operators, messengers in the post office, anybody on the government payroll, legislative payroll, could join for \$2. And we would debate bills before they arrived in the House and Senate. We'd get them from the Government Printing Office, or the document room, and debate them in the old Cannon Building.

JOHNSON: This was called the Little Congress Club?

RUPP: Little Congress of the United States, yes.

JOHNSON: How often did you meet?

RUPP: We initially met once a month, and then there was change. Johnson wanted it to be more active, so he had us come in once a week. And we would debate, and we'd have visiting guests come in and speak to us, like Senators or committee chairmen in the House, and so forth. Or prominent Congressmen, or Senators, and we had—one day we had Senator Huey [Pierce] Long come over to speak to us, and Johnson and I happened to be

sitting together when he came in with his bodyguard, and he was sitting there, met with us, and introduced him, and he started talking when Arthur DeTitta of the Fox Movietone News was taking pictures for newsreels in theaters and whatever. And one of the bulbs made a noise like a gunshot. And Johnson and I looked at each other with a sigh of relief when we knew that's what it was—and he [Huey Long] wasn't being shot at. He was assassinated a couple of months later [September 1935], back in Louisiana.

JOHNSON: Right.

RUPP: I might say this. A Senate Page and I were quite friendly, and he was a Page under Senator Joe [Joseph Taylor] Robinson, who was the Senate Majority Leader. And we'd go to the ball games together, see the Washington Senators play, and Jack Garner, who was Vice President, usually spent all of his time in the Senate Chamber, and Senator Robinson and the other Page boy and I would go out there. We went out several times to see that.

JOHNSON: That must have been fun.

RUPP: It really was. And then I think I sent you a notice, a little brochure about the ball game that the House Republicans and the House Democrats played out at Griffith Stadium.

JOHNSON: Could you talk about that a little bit?

RUPP: Yes. Members of the House on each side played against each other. And Gene Tunney was there. And I don't know whether Jack Dempsey was there or not. But the champion wrestler of the world was there. And Fred

[Frederick Moore] Vinson was someone that we all knew quite well. He later got an appointment under Franklin D. Roosevelt. He became Secretary of the Treasury. And then he was a Supreme Court Justice, and he played second base. Jim [James Michael] Mead of New York, who was a Senator, after he left the House, played on the team, I think as an outfielder or something.

JOHNSON: Was this an annual event, the baseball game?

RUPP: Yes, it was an annual event.

JOHNSON: As a Page, did you help out or organize in any way, or did you just go to watch the game?

RUPP: We just witnessed the game. President Hoover was there. Signed an autographed ball, and threw it out, and that sort of thing.

JOHNSON: Since we're talking sports right now, and baseball, some of the newspaper accounts that have stories about Pages in the past—House Pages and Senate Pages—mention that there were baseball and basketball games and different sporting events that were played by House Pages versus Senate Pages. Was there anything like that when. . .

RUPP: Not when I was there, no.

JOHNSON: No? Nothing like that?

RUPP: Oh, incidentally, Buddy Rogers used to come occasionally, I don't know

maybe you're not old enough to know who he was. I think he was married to Mary Pickford, one of the early actresses in Hollywood. He had been a former Page, and he would come down most every year.

JOHNSON: To go to the baseball game?

RUPP: No, to see the Pages.

JOHNSON: Oh, okay. And he would. . .

RUPP: Buddy Rogers.

JOHNSON: So, was that something that was, that would happen from time to time. Former Pages would come talk to you?

RUPP: Well, he was the only one, really. That's the reason I think we ought to reinstitute the National Fraternity of Pages. So we could all keep track of who's a Page, and when and why and where they are. And get in touch with each other and have some rapport between us. Otherwise, the way it was when I was there, we all left eventually, and we never heard from one another after that. And Jim [James Thomas] Kolbe was the only Page that I ever met, and we just met by chance in Tucson, before he was elected to Congress. He mentioned Pages sitting in a booth next to my wife and me, and my ears were very much alert at that moment. And, we introduced ourselves and talked to him. And later on, he ran for the House and has been there 20 years, and I think on the, on the Page Board, and so on.

JOHNSON: So, you didn't keep in touch, then. There's no way for you to keep in touch

with any of the Pages.

RUPP: No! Because you have no idea where they are. Oh, incidentally, the girl I married was from Missouri. . .

JOHNSON: And what was her name, please?

RUPP: Her name was Verda Mae—two words—McCullough. M-C-C-U-L-L-O-U-G-H.

JOHNSON: Okay.

RUPP: And her father was a secretary to Democratic Congressmen only. He told me one day that he was such a good Democrat that he thought Eleanor Roosevelt was pretty. So, he worked for quite a number of Congressmen. He was sort of a topnotch secretary with two or three or four different Congressmen when I met him. He would assign the work, and tell people what to do, and so on and so forth. And then my wife—the girl I married—used to go with a Senate Page. His name was Walter Reed, same as the hospital. And his patronage was Senator Henrik Shipstead. He was a Farm Laborite. The only one we had by that party. His nephew went to Annapolis and came out as an ensign, and that's when I took over, when he was out of town. And we met afterwards at Mrs. Reed's—she was the boy's mother—and we met at her home after the war, and he was a four-striper, a captain in the Navy, and I'd been just a little j. g. in the Coast Guard. He was in uniform; I wasn't.

JOHNSON: You mentioned a couple of minutes ago about the National Fraternity of

Pages. And you had a pin from the National Fraternity of Pages.

RUPP: I enclosed that, didn't I?

JOHNSON: Right. So, I have the image [of the pin], but I was hoping that you could describe the pin and what you know about the fraternity.

RUPP: Okay, that's fine. I got the pin from a former Page, and he worked on the floor of the House, and he was a person probably 20 or 30 years older than I. I don't really know what his assignment was, but as I say, money was quite scarce at the time, and on that pin, foolishly, I didn't ask him much about it. I should have, but I noticed on the pin, the National Fraternity of Pages pin, that it had the date 1912, and his name was Meyer. Same initials as mine—G. N.—Meyer, M-E-Y-E-R. And that was on the pin, so apparently, that may have been the last year that it was in existence. And I was hoping that you, or your office, or Kolbe or somebody, could contact the Patent Office, under the Department of Commerce in Virginia, the Patent and Trademark Office. There's a notation on the back of the pin, "patent pending," and maybe you could inquire, if you ever wanted to reinstate the House and the Senate fraternity, and now sorority, too. Could [you] find out from them, just tell them that you'd like to know who applied for the patent, if they could give you the information, so you could check and find out whether the company is still in existence or not, and/or could you get some drawings of the pin? If you wanted to follow the same design of the pin that was in use.

— GLENN RUPP —

INTERVIEW TWO

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted by phone, with the interviewee and interviewer in Green Valley, Arizona, and Washington, D.C., respectively.

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson, interviewing Glen Rupp, a House Page from 1932 through 1936; this is the second interview with Mr. Rupp, it is April 28, 2005. We ended our discussion yesterday talking about the National Fraternity of Pages and the pin that you purchased, and I was hoping today that we could start off with a little more on your service as a Page in the Speaker's Lobby. When you were in the Speaker's Lobby, you had contact with a lot of Members. In general, how did they treat the Pages?

RUPP: Oh, great. They treated us fine. Never had anybody that, I would say, wasn't kind to us. They were super.

JOHNSON: What Representatives do you remember the most? Is there anyone that stands out most in your mind?

RUPP: I don't think so. We paged all the Congressmen, in my case, on the Democratic side. Bob [Robert Lee] Doughton comes to mind; he was Chairman of Ways and Means. Oh, I'll have to tell you about him. I told him, So-and-so from a newspaper would like to see him. So he said, "Tell him to go to hell." And I said, "Yes, sir," and started to walk away, real fast. He said, "Wait, Glenn, wait, don't tell him." I said, "I'm only kidding, I wasn't going to tell him that." That was just one experience that I had there. But chairmen of Rules, and Ways and Means, and Appropriations, and a few

like that, may have been people that we paged more than the run of the mill.

JOHNSON: What about the women that were serving in Congress? Do you remember any of them?

RUPP: Oh, I remember them all. Edith Nourse Rogers, Mary [Teresa] Norton, Isabella [Selmes] Greenway, and Ruth Bryan Owen were four of them. They were all Democratic, and they were all fine ladies. Real nice, I would say, and did a real great job.

JOHNSON: Did you ever have occasion to speak with them or run any errands for them?

RUPP: Oh, sure. I'd speak to them every day when they came in, and would page them, so on and so forth, and I can tell you a story, a little later on, something very unusual, that happened in the House. Edith Nourse Rogers became involved, if you want me to tell you that now.

JOHNSON: Sure, you can tell me now.

RUPP: Well, the Doorkeeper, Joe Sinnott, grabbed me one day. Somebody broke through the main door, coming from the Senate Chamber to the House; we called that "the main door." And he got through past the doorkeepers. He had an envelope under his arm, and he was hollering, and heading down the aisle towards the Speaker's Rostrum, and Joe Sinnott told me to get that guy out of there. And he was saying that he had a message from God that he was supposed to give to the Speaker. And I grabbed him around the waist and he fussed a little bit, but I kept him going and took him out to the lobby, and out the front door of the Capitol. And Edith Nourse Rogers came off the floor and talked to him, and he was later admitted to St. Elizabeths mental

institution.

JOHNSON: Do you remember what year that was?

RUPP: Oh, that would have been about '35, '36.

JOHNSON: Okay.

RUPP: Yeah, and then, there was another occasion of something happening on the floor like that. Do you want me to tell about that?

JOHNSON: Sure.

RUPP: When I was in the Speaker's Lobby and the Members kept running . . . we had swinging doors there, they just flipped back and forth. And a couple of them fell down on the floor and I said, "What's going on, what's the matter? What's going on inside?" And they said, well, there's a man up in the gallery, above the Republican Page bench, and he's waving a gun that's cocked, and says he wants to come down to the floor and speak 20 minutes for the American people. And Congressman [Melvin Joseph] Maas, that's M-A-A-S, of Minnesota, who's an ex-Marine, he walked underneath the gallery, and said, "Toss the gun down, buddy, and come on down to speak." In the meantime, the doorkeepers in the gallery saw what was going on, and they grabbed him, and they took him away to St. Elizabeths.

And then there was another time, while I'm on the subject of the gallery. A lady was in the gallery pretty close to the Democratic bench, and she was nursing her baby in the gallery. And the Members were looking up there, and Joe Sinnott, I don't know why I happened to be the guy around, available to

him to send up to see her, and tell her to please stop nursing the baby because it was interrupting the Congressmen on the floor. So I told her in a nice way, and she quit, and that was the end of that one.

Outside of Eddie Cantor being up in the gallery, that's the only one I know that there's something to tell about what happened in the gallery, outside of visitors like Mae West, and movie stars, and that sort of thing, that would come in, and we would know about it.

JOHNSON: These events all took place while you were a Page in the Speaker's Lobby?

RUPP: Oh, yes, they were all in the mid-'30s.

JOHNSON: Would you be able to describe what the Speaker's Lobby looked like?

RUPP: Oh, sure. Looking at the House Chamber from the side door, the one next to the lobby, it would be on the south side running parallel to the House Floor, and the only thing that separates them besides the wall is the couple sets of swinging doors, where the Congressmen, either Democrats or Republicans, would go into the House Chamber, when they come for a vote, or when they come to the floor—that's the nearest route for them to get on the floor. And then the lobby, right immediately, when you come from the south side, there was a weather map there that the weather department always sent a man down who would put the weather on the map so the Members could look at that when they came in, because it wouldn't be on television, because that wasn't even around. And then on down, further going towards the other end of the lobby—that would be on the north side, ran from north to south—there were leather davenports, and chairs, sitting there. And, the newspaper reporters would come down from the gallery in a drove sometimes and

interview Congressmen when a real story broke and they wanted to have a lot of Congressmen paged off the floor. And then we would go in and get them. But then, to the left, that would be the furthest end of the House Chamber, or Speaker's Lobby, facing the White House, going all the way west, were racks of the well-known newspapers of each state, and a Page would put those newspapers on the rack every day, so the Members could see them. And then there was a room in there, where reporters could talk to Congressmen that they'd paged off the floor.

JOHNSON: So this was a place where Members would spend some time together?

RUPP: That's correct. And then I want to tell you about the cloakroom, too, on the opposite end of the chamber.

JOHNSON: The Democratic Cloakroom?

RUPP: Yes. And the Republican. Everything is duplicate: To the right of the Speaker's Rostrum are the Democrats, and to the left would be the Republicans.

JOHNSON: Did you spend a lot of time in the Democratic Cloakroom?

RUPP: Well, quite a bit. To go to the cloakroom, you go off the floor of the House, and it runs parallel to the lobby, at the far east end of the chamber. And as you go in there's two sets of doors. The furthest one toward the Republican side were doors where you, when you walk into the cloakroom, were leather davenports and chairs, wood-burning fireplaces, and that sort of thing. And then to the right, or to the south end of the cloakroom was a concession stand that had candy bars and sandwiches and tobacco and all that sort of

thing. And then in the corner, in the very corner of the cloakroom, was a round metal table with chairs so Congressmen or Pages could sit down and have a quick sandwich. At that time there was always a bowl of hard-boiled eggs in the pan, and you would take the eggs out, and crack the shell, take the shell off, there'd be salt and pepper shakers there, and put salt and pepper on the eggs, and take the whole egg in your hand, and eat it. And one time I was sitting there doing that when Speaker [William Brockman] Bankhead came in. He was coming over to get an egg, too. And I was going to get up. And he motioned to me to stay there, so we ate an egg together, and talked while we were doing that.

JOHNSON: What did you talk about, do you remember?

RUPP: Well, no.

JOHNSON: Just casual talk?

RUPP: Yeah. Nothing in particular. Because we'd see each other every day, anyway. And then, here's the interesting part of that whole story. A black, or Afro-American man, a totally blind man, ran the stand. His name was J. J. Coates, C-O-A-T-E-S. And he had another man that helped him, an Afro-American man. And he told me one day that his family, either great-grandfather, or great-great-grandfather on down, all had that concession, since the Capitol was built. And we Pages, that's the interesting part of the story, we Pages would charge candy bars for a nickel, and we'd charge Cokes. And then they had apples there, too, at that time, and I couldn't believe the price, the high price, of five ¢ apiece—big red apples, and yellow apples.

And then, as you go further, toward the right, further south in the lobby, is

where the telephones were; there were about six telephone booths in there, and the Pages and doorkeepers that work in there answer the phone when it rings, and on the Democratic side they always said, "House Democratic," and find out who's calling and want to have a Member paged if he's on the floor. It could be his own office, or it could be one of the governmental departments, or it could be the White House, or anywhere. And, when I went there, Bill Bray, B-R-A-Y was in charge of the phones, and a man by the name of C. C. Emerson was his assistant. Well, Bray went with Jim Farley—I think I mentioned this to you the other day—to the Postmaster General's office, as his head man to talk to the House or Senate, or whatever.

JOHNSON: Were those two men that you just mentioned—Bray and Emerson—were they both Pages?

RUPP: No, they were older men, and I don't know what they really called those positions. They were men. I never heard, never did know, what they called them. And Gene Dingler, D-I-N-G-L-E-R, was another one. He was from the District of Columbia. And Emerson was made a Kentucky Colonel by one of the Members from Kentucky that liked him, and they became friendly. And after he was made a Kentucky Colonel, everybody called him "Colonel Emerson." "Colonel," that's the name he had. And then, immediately to the right of the telephone area was the cloakroom, where the Congressmen would put their hats (everybody wore a hat or cap then) and their outer shoes, hats, coats, everything, they'd put it in with this man. And believe it or not, this man who was in there was there all the time I was in the House, five years that I know of, I'm sure he never knew any Congressman's name. He might have known the Speakers, or somebody like that. They would just put the coat on the railing, when they'd come up there and he'd put it away. No name, no ticket, no nothing, and when the Member would

come back for whatever he left with him, the man would pick it out and hand it to him.

JOHNSON: That's impressive.

RUPP: I was pretty impressed. Because I could do that with names and people, like in the Speaker's Lobby. I didn't care if there were five or 10 reporters, or maybe 20; even, it wouldn't be that many, but I didn't care how many there were if we were busy, and I'd be the only one to take care of them, I'd have to remember the reporter's name, his newspaper, and if he wanted to see one, two, three, four, or five Members, whoever I could find, I could do it. But I never wrote anything down. Does that sound unusual, or not?

JOHNSON: That sounds pretty incredible. I think you have a fantastic memory.

RUPP: Well, I did at that time, I don't now.

JOHNSON: I think you still do.

RUPP: All right, I won't argue with you. But then, next to that, to the cloakroom, was the law library. It's a small library and we only had one person in it while I was there. And he was always there—name was Robins, R-O-B-I-N-S. And I guess, if a Congressman had a legal question that he thought could be answered in there, he would go in there. And then, immediately after the law library would be another set of doors that would go out to the Speaker's Lobby. Two of us from the lobby door would always come into the chamber, follow the Speaker in, and we'd get inside, and we'd stand against the door, the swinging doors, so nobody could get in—Congressman, or Senator, or nobody else. We never had any problem that way, but we were instructed

never to let anybody come in until the Speaker struck the gavel on the wood piece on the Speaker's Rostrum and told the Chaplain to offer prayer, and read the minutes of the last meeting, and so forth.

JOHNSON: You mentioned reporters earlier. Did you have to run errands to the Press Gallery?

RUPP: No, no, we never did that. Never once in five years did I go up there. But here's something I didn't tell you. People who are permitted to go on the floor of the House: of course, sitting Members, ex-Members of the House, sitting Senators, Cabinet members, and the Speaker's secretary, and one reporter from the AP and UP and IP at the time I was there—United Press, International Press, and Associated [Press]. They had the privilege of, but they never went in on the floor. And the only Speaker's secretary that I know went in there was Speaker Bankhead's secretary. But Speaker [Joseph Wellington] Byrns and [Henry Thomas] Rainey, and Garner, they always, I don't know why, but they always talked to me, and I always went in to the Speaker's desk for them, too. They'd stop at the Speaker's door, didn't enter the lobby. We had the most difficult place to be trained to work because you have to know every Congressman by name and by sight, and they came in there fast, sometimes, when they came for a roll call, and you had to stop anybody that comes in there that doesn't belong in there. You stop them, physically, with your hands, if you need to.

JOHNSON: Did you ever make a mistake and ask someone to stop when they were a Congressman?

RUPP: Well, no, but I can tell you one that I stopped. He was a Member-elect, and one of the Senate office buildings is named after him—see if you can guess

who it was.

JOHNSON: Who would that be?

RUPP: Everett [McKinley] Dirksen.

JOHNSON: Oh—Dirksen, okay.

RUPP: Yeah, he was breezing in there pretty fast, I held up my hand, I said, “Just hold it right there, now. Are you a Member-elect? If you are, you can come in; if not, you can’t.” He said, “I’m a Member-elect.” And that’s the only time I ever had to stop him. He was a so-called orator in the House—Everett Dirksen—and he was a chain smoker, too. And on that door that I’m describing, I told you, or you read that, I guess, where Lyndon Johnson came over and worked for me on the Speaker’s Lobby door.

JOHNSON: Right.

RUPP: Right there.

JOHNSON: And, with Lyndon Johnson, one of the articles that you had sent to me, it mentioned that you spent some time with him outside of the House of Representatives, as well.

RUPP: Yeah, let me finish this. So, anyway, this was in ’34. I said, “I’m going to try to stay in Washington this year, and get a job if I can get one.” And of course, he was secretary to Congressman Dick Kleberg, and he ran that office like he was Dick Kleberg. So, he used it to great advantage. He said, “I’ll get you a job.” “Oh,” I said, “You’re kidding!” He said, “No, I’ll make a phone

call right now.” So, we went into the law library and borrowed the phone from Robins, and he got on the phone and he talked to the assistant undersecretary of Agriculture, Julian Friant, and he was telling him about me, and he was building me up so big, I said, “Lyndon,” I said, “I don’t know who you’re talking about anymore. I’m leaving.” I went back to the door.

And the next thing I knew, I had an invitation to go with the group deep-sea fishing out in the Chesapeake Bay. And Julian Friant and his assistant, and the district attorney for Washington, and the Federal Housing Administration personnel director was on there. There were about 12 or 15 of us. And there was one other Page and I that were on the fishing boat. And I thought, “So, when’s he going to say something about coming to work for him?” He didn’t say anything until the boat got back; he said, “Come on to my office tomorrow morning.” And he said, “I’ll take care of you.” And that’s all because of Lyndon Johnson. That’s how slick it worked. And those jobs were hard to get at that time.

JOHNSON: I’m sure they were.

RUPP: That was the Agriculture Adjustment Administration [AAA], declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

JOHNSON: So you got to know Lyndon Johnson well because you also socialized together?

RUPP: Oh, yeah, we double-dated. I asked my girlfriend once (she was always with me). I said to her one day, I said, “Tell me, what do you think of Lyndon?” And I almost fainted, dropped over, when she told me. Do you know what

she said?

JOHNSON: What?

RUPP: “I think he’s a big hick.” {shared laughter} Well, I knew he was going to go places. He was always, you know, eager that way.

JOHNSON: Were you able to meet up with him again after he was elected to Congress?

RUPP: Well, I went back to Ohio and joined the paper company and was with them about 50 years. But one time, my wife and I—that was right after we saw Ralph Roberts as Clerk, with my wife and younger son—went to the Senate. And while we were in the lobby of the Senate, we bumped into somebody that had known my wife when she was a little girl; he had been a former Senate Page, name was Bill Cheatham. And he was the assistant Sergeant at Arms. So, he grabbed hold of us, he said, “Listen, I’ll take you up to the Gallery.” So we went up to the gallery, and we sat together, and he said, “Are you going to see Lyndon Johnson?” And I said, “Why?” And he said, “I know you knew him well.” He was then, of course, Vice President and he wasn’t Majority Leader anymore. And he said, “I saw him at breakfast; he was at the breakfast for Carl [Trumbull] Hayden,” the Senator for Arizona who had finished 50 years on Capitol Hill as a Congressman and a Senator. He started out as a sheriff in Arizona, and was then elected to Congress, and then from the House he went to the Senate. His total number of years were 50 in the House and Senate. So, he said, “He was at the breakfast, I saw him down there.” He said, “Boy, Johnson will want to see you if he knows you’re here. I’ll go down and tell him and point to where you are. He’ll either motion for you to come down, or . . .” He didn’t say he’d come up to see me, but he said he definitely wanted to see me. So, he went down, and he finally came back.

And he said, "Nobody seems to know where Lyndon is. He's not around anywhere." So, before we went back [to New Jersey], he [Bill Cheatham] called the Senator from New Jersey to come out to the lobby and see my wife and son. He was from the same town, Mountainside, New Jersey, at that time. And so, we got in the car and drove home and had the radio on, and it told about the fact that [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy had Johnson go to Germany to the Berlin Wall, and talk to those people. He was on the airplane, and that's the reason we didn't see him, I guess.

JOHNSON: Well, that would make sense.

RUPP: But he might not have wanted to see me, but I doubt it. I think he would have. Oh, can I tell you something off the record now, or wait until after the recording is over? It's something aside from what we're talking about.

JOHNSON: If you think it's important to your history, you could tell me now.

RUPP: Well, it's the Congressman where I got my patronage, I was with in Washington.

JOHNSON: Congressman Kniffin?

RUPP: Frank Kniffin. And so, I went to see Frank at his office; he was a referee in the bankruptcy court. He said, "Hey, what do you think? I just took a trip to Washington, and I have to tell you about it." I said, "Okay, I'm ready to hear it." He said, "I went to the Supreme Court," in their new building, after they left the Capitol, and he always wore a bow tie, so he was distinguishable because of the tie, if nothing else. But he was sitting in the audience, and some man was up there arguing his case, and the Chief Justice, Fred Vinson,

spotted Kniffin sitting down in the visiting room, and he called a Page and sent him over to pick up Kniffin and bring him back to his office. The two of them, he said, went back to his office, and he said Fred Vinson put his feet up on the desk, took out his pack of cigarettes, gave him one, and he lit up one, and they just talked over old times after visiting back and forth, about their families.

JOHNSON: And you had mentioned Vinson yesterday in the baseball game you said that he had played in. Which was 1932, I think, was the one that you had mentioned.

RUPP: You're right. He was the one on second base. And I knew him, not as well I'd say as the Congressman but I doubt if he'd have done that for me, but if I'd been with the Congressman, I'd have been in with him to see him in the office. I would have been welcome. Let's put it that way.

JOHNSON: I wanted to get your impression, if you don't mind, when you left Washington. That was in 1936, when you stopped being a Page?

RUPP: No, I went to the Federal Housing Administrator's office. And I was there five years.

JOHNSON: From the time that you stopped working in D.C., and then you came back and you said you were on this visit, which was in the 1960s, what differences did you notice in the Capitol? What struck you as being different?

RUPP: Everything was the same. I didn't notice any difference.

JOHNSON: Okay.

RUPP: You want to know about what I did at the Federal Housing Administrator's office?

JOHNSON: We can talk about that in a little while. When you first started working as a Page, it was the Great Depression.

RUPP: Oh, you wouldn't believe how bad it was.

JOHNSON: What was Washington, D.C. like at the time, during the Depression?

RUPP: Well, everything looked all right and normal to me, but I knew that people didn't have very much money, they were just getting by, I'd say, at best. I didn't see anything different about it than I saw later on.

JOHNSON: And when you first started, the Republicans had a slight edge in the House. But in 1933, the Democrats took control, and FDR was elected.

RUPP: Well, I'd say, in the 72nd Congress, in the years of 1931 and '32, [Nicholas Longworth] was Speaker, Republican from Ohio, I think in '31. And they had just a slight majority in the House, of a few more Republicans than Democrats. But Speaker Longworth died, and a couple of Republicans died, so it tipped the scale, it went Democratic. If you have 218 Members, you're in the majority (there's 435 in the House). So they barely had a majority.

JOHNSON: Did you notice any difference when the Democrats took control of the House?

RUPP: Well, see, they were always in control when I went there. They took control

in '32, '31, actually. Garner was a former Majority Leader, and he was elected Speaker.

JOHNSON: What about when FDR became President and the famous “First Hundred Days” when so much legislation was passed? What was it like in Congress?

RUPP: Well, I can tell you, we got messages every day—seemed like every day—from the White House and the Brain Trust. You’re familiar with the Brain Trust, aren’t you?²

JOHNSON: Yes.

RUPP: Yeah, well, they dictated, really, what legislation was to be passed, like the WPA [Work Projects Administration] and the AAA [Agricultural Adjustment Administration], NRA [National Recovery Administration], PWA [Public Works Administration], NYA [National Youth Administration], CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], RFC [Reconstruction Finance Corporation], and Tennessee Valley Authority [TVA]. Lyndon Johnson left the House, Kleberg’s office, when the NYA was passed, and he was made director of NYA in the state of Texas. That’s how he got his political start. And then, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Congressman James [Paul] Buchanan of Texas, died, and he happened to be from Johnson’s area, in the same congressional district. So, Lyndon Johnson and nine other people ran for the House, from that district in Texas. Some newspapers alleged that Lyndon Johnson even found names off of gravestones that voted for him, and so forth. And he won, by less than 100 votes. That’s how he got started in the House. And he was given a seat on the House Naval Affairs Committee. That was after I was gone.

JOHNSON: Just to backtrack a little, you said that you were receiving lots of messages during the period. Did you have to work into the night? Was that a common thing, because there was so much going on during that time frame?

RUPP: Well, we worked, maybe, two to three nights a month, no more than that.

JOHNSON: And what was that like, what was a day like when you had such long hours that you had to work? Were you so busy that it went by quickly?

RUPP: It was interesting, so we didn't mind it. It was just part of the job, and we had to do it. So, we never even thought anything about it, we just did it. And we'd always have the light on the dome of the Capitol burning when we were in session. I suppose it's that way, today, too, isn't it? When they're there at night?

JOHNSON: Yes, it is.

RUPP: I used to put the flag up, too, once in a while, up on the top of the Capitol, on the House side.

JOHNSON: Was that a task assigned to Pages?

RUPP: Yes. But I just did it once or twice. I don't know who did it regularly. Well, there was one Page that we never mentioned. That was the amendment Page that sits down in front of the Speaker's Rostrum, and if a Member wants to offer an amendment to a bill, he just holds it up, the Page runs down and gets it, and takes it up to the Speaker, hands it to the reading clerk, and that's the way that's handled.

Oh, I have to tell you something that's very interesting, that I think you'll enjoy hearing. I'm probably the only person that ever introduced a bill for a Congressman who was dead, since the Congress started in 1789. A Congressman [Charles Vilas] Truax—T-R-U-A-X, from Mansfield, Ohio, came to me, and he said, "Glenn," he said, "I don't feel too well." It was around 1:00, [and] he said, "I've got a bill here, a private bill, that has to be introduced today"—for some reason or other, I don't know why—and he said, "I'll give it to you, and you hang on to it; I don't feel well, I'm going over to my apartment (near the Capitol, a couple blocks away) and I'm going to lie down. If I can make it back, I will, but if you don't see me before the House adjourns, by 4:00, you introduce the bill." Well, I didn't see him, it was 4:00, so I put the bill in the hopper on the Speaker's Rostrum. (That's the way you introduce a bill, either addressing the Speaker and making some comments and giving it to the reading clerk, or to the enrolling clerk, for proper committee assignment.) So, I couldn't do that, because I wasn't a Member. So I put it in the box. And that evening, I read in the paper that he was found in his room between 2:00 and 3:00, and had died. And I had introduced a bill, and he was already dead. Do you agree that it might have been the only one?

JOHNSON: It certainly is an unusual case.

RUPP: {laughter} You can say that again.

JOHNSON: I'm going to take this opportunity to stop for a minute, so I can change tapes. Would that be all right with you?

RUPP: That's fine.

END OF PART ONE ~ BEGINNING OF PART TWO

JOHNSON: All right, you had finished telling me about Congressman Truax from Ohio.

RUPP: Ohio. Yes, Mansfield, Ohio.

JOHNSON: And was there anything else that you wanted to continue with that story?

RUPP: I'll tell you about another incident on the House Floor, if you want to hear it.

JOHNSON: Sure.

RUPP: I wasn't on the lobby door, I was still a Page on the bench, and the buzzer rang, and the overseer said to get the Speaker *pro temp*, whoever was in the chair, presiding. So, Jack Garner had left the chair, and he was sitting in one of the seats, and had his arm out in the aisle. And when the Speaker *pro temp* calls for a Page, you get down there in a hurry. So, I was flying down there pretty fast, and I hit him on the elbow pretty hard, and boy, I never heard a guy in my life being cussed out like he cussed me out. And then I apologized, and he said, "Forget about it." And after that, every day when he'd come in from his office to adjourn the House—and he was a very thrifty man, this was a big deal to him, and it was fine with me, too—he'd hand me the *Washington Star* every day. Trying to make up for, you know, he'd been pretty rough with me—

JOHNSON: For you accidentally bumping into him.

RUPP: That's correct.

JOHNSON: There were several Speakers while you were a Page in the '30s.

RUPP: That's correct.

JOHNSON: And one of them, Speaker Byrns. . .

RUPP: Yeah, J. W. Byrns.

JOHNSON: He passed away while he was Speaker.

RUPP: Yes, he did. He succeeded Rainey. There was Garner, Rainey, Byrns, and Bankhead.

JOHNSON: And I read about a funeral held for Speaker Byrns.

RUPP: Yes, they had the funeral in the House of Representatives, the only one who was ever there when I was there.

JOHNSON: So you attended the funeral?

RUPP: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, someone from our district, from Van Wert, Ohio, they call it the Petunia Capital of the country—and they sent a nice bouquet of flowers. And the Congressman told me about it, asked me if I could get a picture. Well, you're not supposed to take pictures on the floor, but I got a picture anyway and gave it to them. And they sent it back to the newspaper in Van Wert, Ohio. So they knew all about it, that their flowers

got there. Are you interested in another funeral?

JOHNSON: Whose funeral was it?

RUPP: He was a Georgia Senator, in the Senate Chamber.

JOHNSON: Sure, you can tell me about it.

RUPP: Well, that happened in 1932, and President Hoover was in the White House. And even he came down to the funeral. And I was there, just happened to be there that day, and I was there during the whole thing, and you know who his successor was? Senator Richard B. [Brevard] Russell, [Jr.], from Georgia. He was appointed by the governor to succeed the deceased Senator. The Senate office building is named after him.

JOHNSON: Right.

RUPP: Russell. I was there and saw him sworn in, in 1932. And he turned out to be a great Senator. Johnson relied on him very much when he was Majority Leader in the Senate. He was appointed by the governor to fill the unexpired term and then was re-elected each [election] year thereafter.

JOHNSON: I meant to ask you yesterday, did you elect any officers for the Little Congress Club?

RUPP: We elected all of them. We elected Johnson, in 1933.

JOHNSON: In what position did he serve?

RUPP: I think first he was reading clerk, and then Speaker.

JOHNSON: And what was your position?

RUPP: Nothing, I was just one of the members, like a few of the other Pages.

JOHNSON: About how many people were in the club?

RUPP: In the beginning, there were just about 20 or 30. But then there were probably well over 100. Johnson pretty much got it packed by getting the elevator operators and anybody on the government payroll in the area to join.

JOHNSON: And you had said that you previously met once a month, and then after Johnson came on board, you would meet weekly?

RUPP: Yes, because he'd introduce prominent speakers—Senators or Congressmen, or Cabinet members. Anybody that he thought would do him some good, more or less. He ran it as his own little club. Shall I put it that way? I didn't vote for Johnson, when he ran for President.

JOHNSON: You didn't vote for him, you said?

RUPP: No. That tells you something too, doesn't it?

JOHNSON: Yes.

RUPP: I'm a conservative.

JOHNSON: If you don't mind, we'll step back just a little bit again. You had mentioned

to me something about adjournment dinners that as Pages you had each year. Could you describe these dinners?

RUPP: Well, the dinners, the only dinners that we had together, were the ones that Congressman [Joseph Bernard] Shannon, of Missouri would hold for the Page group, either in the Wardman Park Hotel, or the Shoreham Hotel. I guess they're called something different today, aren't they?

JOHNSON: I'm not sure what they're called today. When you said, "together," did you mean the Republican and the Democratic Pages?

RUPP: Oh, yeah. Johnny McCabe's in the picture with me, if you look at the one that I'm on, where the arrow is, Johnny McCabe is in there, too.

JOHNSON: I'm going to describe it a little bit for people who are listening and can't see [the image]. So, this is from the *Washington Herald*, and it was 1936, and it's a picture of some of the Republican and Democratic House Pages, and you are in this image. And you mentioned that Johnny McCabe was in the picture as well, and he was the chief Page at the time.

RUPP: I think that's correct—the one that I sent you.

JOHNSON: Right, for the Republican Pages. And so this was in 1936. The one that you sent me, and you also sent us a program of what you did during that evening. Can you describe what you remember from the night?

RUPP: Well, it was kind of silly. We spoke either for or against Pages using roller skates in the House of Representatives. Just something to take up the time.

JOHNSON: I noticed that you voted against that.

RUPP: I think I was against it, yeah. I had no reason. I can't tell you what I said, but whatever it says there, that's the side that I was on.

JOHNSON: Each of the five years that you worked as a Page, were there adjournment dinners?

RUPP: Well, they really weren't referred to as adjournment dinners. I think they were just dinners that Congressman Shannon wanted to show his appreciation to the Pages for what they were doing, and so forth. That's the way I always took it. Nobody ever referred to it that I know of as an adjournment dinner, unless the *Washington Herald* referred to it that way.

JOHNSON: Yes, the newspaper accounts, I believe, called it that.

RUPP: That's all right. It could have been. There's nothing wrong with that.

JOHNSON: Were there any other sort of events like this?

RUPP: Oh, yeah. Sol Bloom, he was a Congressman from New York, the New York City area, and he was great. He always took the Pages to the Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. Circus every year. He was the only one that did that sort of thing.

JOHNSON: And what about for holidays, did you do anything special for any of the holidays?

RUPP: No, nothing. Just like you would do, at the Clerk's office. Probably work.

{laughter}

JOHNSON: Yes, and get away for an office party. What about school? I didn't ask you about that yesterday. Did you go to school while you were a Page?

RUPP: I went to the Strayer Business School when I could, at night, after the House adjourned, or if we didn't have night sessions. And I took business courses there (shorthand and typing), that I could use in the Congressman's office, and so forth.

JOHNSON: The younger Pages, did they go to school?

RUPP: Yeah. The Pages that weren't graduates of high school always went to a Page school in the Capitol building. The House, the Senate, and the Supreme Court Pages all went to the same school, near where the Old Senate Chamber was. And when they graduated, they were issued a diploma on one of the local high schools, as I understand it.

JOHNSON: Did you know anything specifically about the classes that were taught, or any of the teachers?

RUPP: No, I didn't. We didn't know a thing about it. Never went to it, never saw it, really, except knew the boys were missing in school, and went there to do some of the work.

JOHNSON: It doesn't sound as if you had a lot of free time, because your job kept you so busy, but when you did, were there any sort of activities that you would do together as Pages?

RUPP: Oh, a few times, we had people like Fox Movietone would come down if there was snow on the ground, and we'd have snowball fights and things like that, which they would show in the different theaters, like they used to do.

JOHNSON: They would show you having snowball fights?

RUPP: Yeah.

JOHNSON: And some of the things that I had read about were pranks that some of the Pages would play.

RUPP: If we had a green Page on the job and he didn't know ahead of time what we were doing, we might send him for a check stretcher, or a sky hook, and keep a straight face, and assign either the Clerk's office or the House Document Room, or somewhere else to go get it. And he'd go there, scratching his head all the way over there to figure out how he was going to ask for such a silly thing. That's just a saying that through the years, I think everybody did it. You only talked about it once, when you pulled it off. And it was no big deal, just a silly thing that happened every once and a while.

JOHNSON: So it was a bit of a tradition among the Pages?

RUPP: That's it. That's the only place I ever heard of it.

JOHNSON: When you were a Page—this was during the 1930s—one thing I wanted to ask you about was the radio. Radio was becoming more popular, so I was wondering if any of the Members of Congress that you had to run errands for or spent time with had radios in their offices?

RUPP: Oh, I think they did. I think some of them did.

JOHNSON: And what about throughout the Capitol?

RUPP: Well, I remember this. That I used to do this, when I was on the Speaker's Lobby door. We'd have, at the time that the Congress, or the House, or the Senate, too, would adjourn *sine die*, usually late in the evening, and I would take different Congressmen into Mr. Robins' office in the law library, where they had something set up so they could broadcast on the radio.³ And they would speak to the constituency. It went all over the country, as well as D.C. And I remember one time, I spoke, as a reward for doing this for the person in charge. He had me speak on the radio. And people back in Ohio heard me, too. My Congressman's wife heard me, too.

JOHNSON: Oh, that must have been exciting. There also were radio newsmen that were trying to get into the Press Gallery. Did you know anything about the radio newsmen?

RUPP: Yes, two friends of mine, Robert Burns and Bob Menaugh. Bob and I worked on the Speaker's Lobby door for three or four years together; he was the man put in charge of the radio press gallery, or whatever they called it. That would have been after '36.

JOHNSON: I think that was about '39.

RUPP: Yeah. He was the one in charge. And Burns went with him. And I saw them after they did that, but just once or twice, bumped into them. And that's all I know about it.

JOHNSON: What about air conditioning? Was that something that you. . .

RUPP: Oh, I'm glad you mentioned that. That was the greatest thing in the world. In 1932, to come to Washington, and to be able to go into the House Chamber, and have it air conditioned. No other place in Washington had air conditioning, except the House Chamber. Not where you are now, or the Senate, or the White House, or anywhere else. We had it number one! And we had on the Speaker's Rostrum, somewhere, a graph that recorded the temperature—I think it was a water-type of air conditioning. It took a lot of water to run it. It wasn't the kind that we have today. It was on an experimental basis, I think, in the House. And either Dr. Calver, or somebody else, kept looking at it, periodically, and kept track of everything.

JOHNSON: And Dr. Calver was the Attending Physician?

RUPP: Attending Physician. Yeah. Calver. Dr. Calver.

JOHNSON: The House offices at the time, the Members' offices, weren't air-conditioned. Is that correct?

RUPP: Oh, no. Oh, heck no.

JOHNSON: Okay, so just the gallery.

RUPP: The chamber.

JOHNSON: Which must have made everyone very happy, with the humid summers that we have in Washington, D.C.

RUPP: Oh, you know how they are. You can imagine how they were, rather. They were really . . . Washington and Baltimore are both really bad on humidity, and the humidity sometimes is higher than the temperature. I'm glad that you asked that, because I meant to tell you about it.

JOHNSON: If you still want to talk, I have a few more questions.

RUPP: Oh, sure.

JOHNSON: Okay, great. The era of Prohibition was still ongoing when you were a House Page.

RUPP: That happened in 1933, when they repealed Prohibition. And one Member from the Democratic side had made a talk in favor of repealing the Volstead Act, and then he got up and made the statement that if we just passed this Prohibition Act, we can balance the budget with all the tax and revenue money that comes in from it. And all they had was 3.2 percent beer, that was how they started. Lyndon Johnson and I had a couple bottles together. The first I ever drank was with him. Just a coincidence, no big deal; I just remembered, that's all.

JOHNSON: Any other recollections about when the amendment [18th] was repealed, and people's reactions to it?

RUPP: Well, the only ones I would have seen would have been, most of them voting for it, in the House. There was no big fight about it, as I remember, in the debate for and against. I think people were pretty much in favor of doing it. So I don't think there was a whole lot of opposition that I recall hearing about or seeing anything.

JOHNSON: Since we're talking about important and significant events of the period, what do you remember about the Bonus March of 1932?

RUPP: Well, did I mention that? Maybe I just mentioned it the other day. We heard, via the radio, and the newspapers, that a bunch of veterans of World War I were marching on the Capitol. They were a destitute bunch, and they were penniless, and their families in some cases were with them. They were called the "Bonus Expeditionary Forces." And we were afraid up at the Capitol, because they were quite insistent on getting a bonus. This was in 1932, and President Hoover had already said that he would veto any bonus bill that was passed. Well, [John William] Wright Patman was in charge of the legislation in the House, and he used to give me money and checks to take down to General Glassford, who was Chief of the Metropolitan Police Force, and they used this money to set up soup kitchens for the veterans and their families. You know where the Commerce Department is, don't you? Do you know the Old Post Office Building?

JOHNSON: I do.

RUPP: All right. They always talked about tearing it down.

JOHNSON: Right. It's still there.

RUPP: From the Old Post Office Building, toward the Capitol, on both sides of the street, were businesses—old, torn-down businesses that were going to be replaced with government buildings. And they were down in '32 at the time the Bonus Marchers came here. And a lot of them went in those old buildings, and they crawled in, wherever they could get comfortable, and get

warm. They would go in there and stay there. And the city, and the White House, and everybody, worked together to provide housing for them. And they went as far away as—you know where Anacostia is?

JOHNSON: Yes.

RUPP: We put some up over there, too. And the Architect of the Capitol was very concerned about the Bonus Marchers coming into the Capitol and getting up around the dome. There are 365 steps—that's circular steps—that go around the dome of the Capitol, onto the top of the Capitol where the statue is, and we Pages used to go up there when it was still open. But they closed that, so we couldn't go up there anymore. And it was never opened after that, I don't believe.

JOHNSON: So, they closed it during the summer of 1932.

RUPP: That's right, and never was opened since that, I don't believe. And the reason they closed it, because the Architect—well, I know this to be a fact—it's lucky to have stood as long as it has. The steel beams are such that they're not too reliable, or something—if you had any mischief, or any fooling around with those beams that hold the dome the way it is, the way you see it, the whole dome would come crashing down.

JOHNSON: He was worried about some type of destruction or vandalism?

RUPP: That's correct. I think it's 585 feet tall from the floor underneath the dome in the Rotunda of the Capitol to the very top. It's quite a distance, seemed like 585 was the number that they used to talk about.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that you would go up to the dome with the Pages. What did you do up there?

RUPP: It was during our lunch hours; we'd just go on our own. We'd do one of two things—either go up there sometimes, or go over to visit the Supreme Court, which always met at noon in the Old Senate Chamber. And I think it did that until '35; they built the new building, and they moved out of the old building.

JOHNSON: In 1935.

RUPP: Yeah. I think that's right.

JOHNSON: Did you have access to just about any place you wanted to go in the Capitol?

RUPP: Oh, yeah. I used to go to the White House as easy as I went to the Capitol. You have to know somebody to do it. I knew Pat McKenna over there; he was the receptionist to the President. I didn't misuse the privilege, I just used it occasionally; if I had friends or important people, I'd call Pat and tell him I'd like to take a few people through the White House, if it's all right, and if he can designate a time. And he never turned me down, once. And he would say, "Just come over to my desk," and then when I would with the people, he'd say, "You know your way around the White House, just take them around like you usually do, and everything's all set." So, I'd go into the Oval Office with them, and show them that, and then take them to the Cabinet Room, to the room where they had the bowling alley, and to the East Room, and one time I had two people in the swimming pool area, and the door was closed. We were standing inside. And there was a rap on the door, I says, "Yeah?" They said, "Glenn?" They said, "The old man's coming down the

hall in a wheelchair. So keep your friends in there so they don't see him.”

JOHNSON: Oh, you're talking about FDR.

RUPP: Yeah, I said something about that in the *Resort Report*, I think.⁴

JOHNSON: What about the Capitol? Did you have a favorite place that you used to like to visit there?

RUPP: Well, I could . . . Can I tell you this story about the Senate Chamber?

JOHNSON: Sure.

RUPP: Well, Ed Weikert—W-E-I-K-E-R-T—and I worked together on the Speaker's Lobby door for four years. And he and I went to the Senate Chamber on Inauguration Day and we went to congratulate two Senators, Senator Jim Mead, of New York, and Senator Ralph [Owen] Brewster—B-R-E-W-S-T-E-R. They were elected to the Senate from having been previously in the House. So we were in the Senate Chamber, talking with them and just kidding around. All of a sudden, the bells rang, alerting the Senators to fall in line, double file from the Senate Chamber to the inaugural stand. So, we said, “Well, excuse us,” and tried to get away from all that. They said, “Absolutely not, you get in line with us.” And we marched with them all the way from the Senate Chamber to the inaugural platform, and sat with them there. But when they went through the Rotunda of the Capitol, I looked off to my left, and there was Eleanor Roosevelt, and Franklin, and John, and Elliott, standing there, awaiting their turn, until the Senators got on the platform, so they could go on. And there were only two people that could have stopped us, and I doubt if they would have had the nerve to do it, but

they could have. One was Ralph Roberts, and the other guy was Landon Mitchell. But they didn't say anything, and we sat there, during the whole ceremony.

JOHNSON: And what were their positions, why could they have stopped you?

RUPP: Well, Ralph Roberts had this job on the floor before he was elected Doorkeeper—he always sat to the left of the Speaker. I never did know what his job was. But he was always there. And then he was elected Doorkeeper, and then Clerk. And the other guy was kind of an assistant to the Doorkeeper.

JOHNSON: And this was in 1933?

RUPP: No, no, this would have been later than that. I think Roosevelt's second inauguration.

JOHNSON: You were at his first inauguration, weren't you?

RUPP: Yes, I was on the inaugural stand March 4, 1933, looked out from where I was sitting, and saw Roosevelt sitting to the left of President Hoover. To his right, Roosevelt was President-elect, and Hoover was the President, and the open cars, and behind them was Mrs. Roosevelt, and Mrs. Hoover in the car that followed. And they came on up to the stand, Hoover and Roosevelt, and that's where Roosevelt gave that talk about, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." I was about 20 feet from him. I could be the only person alive that heard that and saw it. I probably am!

JOHNSON: Were all the Pages in attendance?

RUPP: None of them.

JOHNSON: No?

RUPP: I don't know of one that was there.

JOHNSON: So, how were you able to attend?

RUPP: Well, Henry T. Rainey and I were quite friendly then. He was Majority Leader, and knew he was going to be Speaker. And his wife had asked me if I wanted to be their timekeeper when Rainey was elected Speaker, and I told her, "Yes, and I'd like it very much." And Rainey gave me a letter to take on the inaugural stand, to remove the Presidential seal the President was sworn in under. And I got another fellow that I knew there to help me. We couldn't get a cab or anything, it was so busy, so I took it to the Speaker's office (that was on March 4 of '33) and left it there to pick it up and take it home the next day. And when I went in there, Mrs. Rainey said, "Glenn, if you don't mind, I'd like to keep that presidential seal." And what could I say but, "That's fine with me."

JOHNSON: Right.

RUPP: So that's what I said. They went back to Illinois, and he died four months later.

JOHNSON: Wow, you have so many vivid memories.

RUPP: I think I probably have the best of any Page that ever served there. I really do.

JOHNSON: You certainly have vivid recollections.

RUPP: These are only things that I think about right now. I might think about other ones, later on. I was totally interested in it, and I had hoped to be able to stay there and work in the House the rest of my life as a Doorkeeper, or something like Ralph [Roberts] did, and work on the floor, until he was elected Doorkeeper, and then to the better job, as Clerk.

JOHNSON: And you left in 1936. And what did you do after that?

RUPP: I went to the Federal Housing Administration, to the administrator's office. I was with him five years. And he was just below Cabinet level. On his desk was a White House phone. He picked it up and the White House answered. Even Congressmen or Senators don't have that sort of thing. And then we had three limousines, or three chauffeur-driven cars. One was a top Cadillac, or Lincoln, or Packard, whatever the case might be. They got a new one every year. And an Afro-American six-foot-four-tall chauffeur in uniform with leather shoes and leggings and everything else. And we had that in the office—the Cadillac, and the rest of them. Assistants of his, none of them used the top car except the administrator, or he sent me occasionally, to go see Senators on the Senate side in the chamber, or to the White House, or Congressmen. Or go on personal errands for him; he'd always send me in his car.

Like, one time, he sent me to his wine cellar to send a bunch of wine to a girlfriend of his, who was in the picture *Gone with the Wind*, by the name of Ona Munson. And it was illegal to do it, so I had to figure out, but I did whatever I was asked to do. So I told whoever it was, that I had books, I

thought they were heavy enough to get by, and took the chance, and got away with it. And when I went to the car the first time, I told the chauffeur that I would sit in the front with him. He said, “No, you don’t. And you sit in the back, and you wait until I open the door, and close the door, and when we get where we’re going, you wait until I come around, and open the door, and let you out.” Those were my orders, and I only had to have them once.

JOHNSON: And then you followed them.

RUPP: Yeah. I have to tell you something funny. I was in this administrator’s office, and he’s a kind of a big shot, just below Cabinet status.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

RUPP: Stuart McDonald. And the other one was Abner Ferguson. Stuart McDonald was the main one. He was a very wealthy guy. And he had married Mrs. Moon, of the Moon Motor Company in St. Louis—it used to be a pretty well-known automobile at the time, and they had sold out before the crash.⁵ Later Abner Ferguson became administrator and made calls to Senators and Congressmen that he knew that he’d talk with when the hearings were before their committees and so forth. And he couldn’t find anybody that would get him in to see Wendell Willkie, who previously ran for President on the Republican ticket. He was well known, and he was being investigated for something or other in the Senate. And so, finally I heard enough of it and I went in there and said, “Mr. Ferguson,” I said, “I think if you send me in the car to the Capitol, I can get you and your wife some seats at this hearing.” And he said, “Do you think you can?” I said, “I can’t guarantee it, but I think I can.” He said, “Well, go.” So I went, with the

chauffeur, Matthew Hurd, and while we were going down there, I wondered, “Who in the world am I going to see?” I’d bit off a pretty big chunk, and I might not be able to chew it. I thought of somebody; I said, “Why not see Chesley Journey?” He was the Sergeant at Arms and I knew he could do it, because he’d be over the Capitol Police and everybody else. So I went to his office, he happened to be in. And I said, “Do you remember me, Glenn Rupp, Page in the House?” and he said, “Yeah, I’ve seen you around.” I said, “Well, I’m on a difficult assignment. I’m sticking my neck way out and I’ll probably get it chopped off, but I told my boss, the Federal Housing Administrator, that I thought maybe I could find somebody down at the Capitol that’s nice enough to permit him and his wife to go to the hearing room.” The women of the big shots always liked to go to those things because they all talked about it, and if you couldn’t make it, that sort of dampened things.

— GLENN RUPP —
INTERVIEW THREE

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted by phone, with the interviewee and interviewer in Green Valley, Arizona, and Washington, D.C., respectively.

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson, interviewing Glenn Rupp, a House Page from 1932 through 1936. This is the third interview with Mr. Rupp. It is May 3, 2005. When we ended the last interview, you were telling a story about trying to gain entry to a Senate hearing on behalf of your supervisor at the Federal Housing Administration. And, you were speaking to the Sergeant at Arms when we stopped. Would you like to finish that story?

RUPP: Let's see . . .

JOHNSON: So, I think you ended—or the tape ended—when you were just getting to the point when you were talking to the Sergeant at Arms, and you were trying to get your boss into a Senate hearing.

RUPP: Oh, I see. Did you get the recording where we went over to the Capitol, to the Senators' office building together? On the train?

JOHNSON: I don't believe so.

RUPP: Yeah. Well, he took me over to the Senate office building—

JOHNSON: Okay, and this was the Sergeant at Arms?

RUPP: The Sergeant at Arms. And there were gates up—a number of them, three or

four—with a policeman standing on the side of each gate, to make sure that nobody got in that didn't have a pass to the hearing room.

JOHNSON: Yes, right.

RUPP: Yeah. And so, we went in and the Sergeant at Arms asked where would we like to sit. And I said, "Well" and pointed to the front row, and said, "Those look pretty good to me." And he said, "Well, they do to me, too." He said, "Actually, you can bring them in before the hearing starts, and they can sit anywhere they want to." And so then I went out with him, and I told the policeman, "Please don't challenge me when I come back with a man and a woman—with the Federal Housing Administrator and his wife." And, then we departed, and I went to the chauffeur at the car, parked on Constitution Avenue, and told him to go on back to the office, and I called the administrator, and told him that we were all set, he should just go with the chauffeur, pick up his wife, and the chauffeur would know where to come, and I would be there to meet them. And I took them to the hearing. And so forth. And that was pretty much the end of that deal.

JOHNSON: And do you remember what year that was?

RUPP: It was probably 1935, I would imagine. No, I think it was '36.

JOHNSON: Because this was after you were working as a Page, you were at the FHA.

RUPP: Yes.

JOHNSON: Okay.

RUPP: Then, I've got another interesting thing to tell you if you're interested in hearing it. It happened while I was a Page.

JOHNSON: Sure. Go ahead.

RUPP: Do you know if the Bachrach Studio is still in Washington?

JOHNSON: That doesn't sound familiar.

RUPP: Yeah, it was quite the thing in those days. And my sister-in-law worked there, and she called me to see if there was any possibility of my getting her and the photographer into the committee room that North Dakota Senator Gerald P. [Prentice] Nye was using. And he was investigating J. P. Morgan, the financier. And so, I thought a little while, and I said, "Well, why not go to Senator Nye directly, right off the bat, and see if I can pull this off?" So I went in and had a little talk with Senator Nye, in his office. And I suggested that it might be a good thing to have J. P. Morgan's picture taken, because he had standing orders. No one ever took his picture before, apparently. And Senator Nye seemed to think that was a good idea. So I called my sister-in-law from his office, and I said, "Bring your photographer on down, and meet us at the committee room, and I'll take care of the rest." And I told Senator Nye that I would take over when J. P. Morgan and his first assistant, Al Lamont, was with him. And my sister-in-law and the photographer came there, and they had the old type . . . picture machine photography and the cloak and all that. So I had them set that up to the side, and told them just be ready as J. P. Morgan comes into the room, I'll get him and bring him over, and you can take his picture. So, pretty soon, Morgan and Lamont came in, and I said, "Mr. Morgan." And I'm just a kid in my early 20s, he could have told me to get lost and I'd have probably gotten lost. But I bluffed my way

through, and said, "The first thing we have to do is get your picture taken here. So, you sit in this chair, we'll have the picture taken, and then you come to the stand, and you'll be ready for the committee to begin their session." Oh, and then that evening, because he's never photographed or anything, nobody, I guess, had any idea what he looked like, or the general public didn't. His picture was on the front page of the *Washington Star* that evening. Mission accomplished.

JOHNSON: Very successful.

RUPP: Yeah. It was a much bigger thing than you might think it was, because he was almighty. His word went. And nobody told him what to do or anything. But I did.

JOHNSON: Had you met Senator Nye before this day?

RUPP: Not personally. Not to talk to him. But I knew enough how to get in to see those fellows. It was so easy, I don't even remember doing it hardly. I knew he'd go along with it.

JOHNSON: Since we're going back to your time as a Page, I wanted to ask you a few more questions about that period in your life. Were Pages in the House required to follow a specific dress code?

RUPP: Run that by me again.

JOHNSON: Were you expected to have a specific dress code as a Page? Did you have a uniform or dress code?

RUPP: No, we really wore just our trousers and coat. Always a matched suit and coat, and a white shirt and a tie. But they really didn't tell us even to wear white shirts. But I think I usually did. And the shoes were any color you wanted. They weren't like they were in the Senate, where they wore grey trousers, and a blue suit and coat to go with it. We pretty much wore what we had and what we wanted to wear.

JOHNSON: Earlier we talked a little bit about pastimes and I wanted to ask you about a specific activity. Was the practice of collecting and selling autographs, was this something that was prevalent among Pages? Was there any sort of autograph selling?

RUPP: Not really. I happened to get quite a few autographs, but they were, like, from the Vice President and the Congressmen that I wanted autographs from, and Rudy Vallee. I didn't even get one of some of the people that I should have.

JOHNSON: And that was just for your own collection?

RUPP: That's right. Nobody did it to any great extent, to my knowledge. If they did it, I didn't know about it. There were plenty of opportunities to do that, but after you were there awhile and you saw a lot of people, it didn't make you feel like you wanted to do it particularly . . . bother people with it.

JOHNSON: That makes sense. And you spoke about some of the women that served in Congress during the period, and one woman in particular I wanted to ask you about was Willa [McCord Blake] Eslick, from Tennessee, and her husband [Edward Everett Eslick]. Do you have any recollections of them?

RUPP: Which one was that now?

JOHNSON: Willa Eslick, from Tennessee.

RUPP: Well, that was a male Congressman. And his wife was in the gallery; that's the one that dropped dead there on the floor.

JOHNSON: Right, right. And then his wife took his seat after he died. Were you present on the day that he died?

RUPP: Well, I was [on the] right side of him when he fell down, and I don't recall who took his head and his shoulders in his hands, and I took his feet, and we carried him out to the Speaker's Lobby, and laid him on the davenport out there, and then I went and called Dr. Calver, the Attending Physician of the Capitol, to come right away, and he pronounced him dead.

JOHNSON: This was in June of 1932.

RUPP: No, that would have been probably in the mid-thirties.

JOHNSON: Did you meet his wife, Willa Eslick?

RUPP: I don't know where you got that name.

JOHNSON: Willa Eslick—

RUPP: Did you look it up?

JOHNSON: Yes. She was one of the women that served during the time. She was elected

in a special election to replace her husband.

RUPP: Oh, I see.

JOHNSON: I didn't know if you had a chance to run any errands for her, or if you met her that day.

RUPP: No. It must have been in '36, and she must have been elected after the House adjourned, because I never met her as a Congresswoman having succeeded her husband.

JOHNSON: I also wanted to ask you about your memories of Joint Sessions and Joint Meetings. Are there any that stand out in your mind?

RUPP: Well, I don't think anything in particular. The sessions got pretty hot and heavy sometimes, and the Members were almost fighting—I can't tell you what legislation they were debating, but, anyway, whenever that occurred, and it happened several times while I was there, the Speaker would ask the Sergeant at Arms to take the Mace and go down and he'd hold the Mace over the Members who were about fighting and so forth, and there's a standing rule that if they don't cease and desist at that time, they're automatically expelled from the House of Representatives.

JOHNSON: What about one of FDR's State of the Unions. You had sent us an image, and I believe you were in the picture that was taken, right in front of the rostrum?

RUPP: Yes.

JOHNSON: Can you describe that at all? What do you remember about that day?

RUPP: Well, I think that was in, I know it was in 1933, and we're all anxious to hear the new President address the Joint Session of Congress, and Johnny McCabe was with me, sitting in front of the Speaker's Rostrum at that time. I just sat there for a . . . actually, I was on duty. I just sat there for a little bit. I didn't know they were taking the picture while I was sitting there. He [Franklin Roosevelt] had a very good technique of reading from a prepared speech, and giving it almost as if he was speaking without notes or anything. And Jimmy Roosevelt sat to his left, listening on the platform and, immediately behind him, were the Vice President, sits right behind, to the right, and that would have been, at that time it would have been Jack Garner, who had been Speaker before that. So, Joe Byrns was sitting in the Speaker's chair, with the presiding officer at the time.

Did I tell you that we always had a platform built, and we'd take it in, and put it at the Speaker's Rostrum, so President Roosevelt could walk up the steps to get to the podium to speak? There's no way in the world he could have done it without this. And he always used it. He walked through the Speaker's Lobby, and we'd speak to him and so forth, and we'd open the doors so that he could go on in. And I forgot to tell you this, it was always my job to have a glass of water and one of our House of Representatives towels on the Speaker's Rostrum so he could drink whenever he felt like it. And one of the enrolling clerks always collected those glasses and took them home with him. He prized them very highly when the President drank out of them. And whenever he had any problems at all, the Speaker always entered from the rear, through the lobby—Speaker's Lobby—whereas after that, they always come in on the east door, and the Doorkeeper at that time always introduced the visiting guests and the diplomatic corps, the Senators, and

everybody else.

JOHNSON: So, I just wanted to get back to the image for a second. You're seated in front of the rostrum, and you said that Johnny McCabe, the chief of the Republican Pages is there. So, you were there just for a short time, and where did you go after that?

RUPP: I went where I should have been then, to the Speaker's door. I was just goofing off, really. I wanted to be inside and see some of it. Lyndon Johnson used to do that, too. When he worked for me.

JOHNSON: Oh, did he?

RUPP: Yeah, he was always missing. He was inside watching and listening and so forth. And I think, hoping that he would someday succeed the President. It was an interesting thing—I don't know whether I touched on that or not—I think several things enticed Johnson to go all the way, which he did. One was his being able to be on the floor of the House when he worked on the Speaker's Lobby door. And then he was made National Youth Administrator for the state of Texas, when he got back there, then the Congressman—I think I told you this—that represented his district passed away. And then Johnson and nine other people ran for the job, and Johnson got it, but I don't know if he won it fairly. The reason he was elected was because when he was campaigning, it was at the time that Roosevelt had tried to get the Congress interested in going along with him and having a Supreme Court packed because they were getting unfavorable decisions, like the Triple A [Agricultural Adjustment Act] was declared unconstitutional, and so was the NRA. Roosevelt asked, "Who is that young Congressman that's campaigning in Texas for the House? I'm going to take a trip by train down through that

area, and I want him to be with me when I travel through the state.” So, they said it was Lyndon Johnson, and they made arrangements for Johnson to meet Roosevelt, to be with him. And they got to be such good playmates or pals, that Roosevelt became like a grandfather to Johnson. And then Johnson was elected. [James Paul] Buchanan was the name of the man that died. He was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. And that’s the seat that Johnson filled.

Well, anyway, when Johnson was elected then, he had immediate entrée to the White House. He could go down and see Roosevelt at will, where senior Congressmen couldn’t even do it. He was encouraged and helped an awful lot by Roosevelt, in the White House. That’s partially why, I think, if it hadn’t have been for Roosevelt, Johnson would not have been elected to the House in the first place. Nor would he have gone as far as he did. To the Senate, then Majority Leader, then Vice President under Kennedy and, of course, then President.

JOHNSON: All the way to President. I have a few more questions, if that’s okay.

RUPP: Okay, sure.

JOHNSON: What do you remember about the only African-American Member that served, Oscar [Stanton] De Priest, while you were a Page?

RUPP: Well, Oscar De Priest was a Republican, and he always sat in the front row. And he was very quiet, and . . . I think—I could be wrong about this, so, I don’t know—it seemed to me like he wore a swallowtail coat, but I’m not absolutely sure of that. But he always sat there, and I never heard him open his mouth or speak one time. Oh, and I have to tell you, another one that sat

with him was, sat where he did . . . close proximity to him was [Fiorello Henry] La Guardia of New York.

JOHNSON: Oh, okay.

RUPP: He was a Fusionist candidate. The only one that we had. But he always sat on the Republican side, and he was always in demand by people coming to visit the House Chamber, they wanted to hear La Guardia talk. Is he going to talk and so forth, and Huey Long in the Senate. Those two in particular. Now, that was in 1932, when I first went there. Fiorello La Guardia ran for mayor, then, in November in '32, and was elected, of course.

JOHNSON: Right, of New York.

RUPP: So I only saw him for one year. One session.

JOHNSON: So, because De Priest was a Republican, and you were a Democratic Page, you really didn't have that much interaction with him?

RUPP: Well, I would always see him when he came through the door, in the Speaker's Lobby, when he'd go in and out. He always passed us. So I saw as much of him as I would . . . you know, maybe anyone. Since he was not very active. I don't know if he didn't run or whether he was defeated. He never came back after '32. That was the last we saw of him.

JOHNSON: I think he was in for one more term; the 73rd Congress [1933–1935] was his last Congress.

RUPP: Oh, was he? Yeah. That could have been. But he wasn't very active. Let's put

it that way.

JOHNSON: All right. I just have one more question for you. It's a broad question. I would like to know what kind of effect did your years as a Page have on your life. Do you think that it changed your life in any way?

RUPP: Would you repeat that, please?

JOHNSON: Sure. Do you think that being a Page in the House of Representatives changed your life in any way?

RUPP: Oh, I'm sure it did. You have such a good feeling; I think you probably feel a lot better about yourself having had the privilege of serving in the House or Senate. It's bound to affect you quite a bit. And I think it helped me in later life, too, as I . . . got older and left. Never forgot it.

JOHNSON: Did it influence your interest in history, did it make you more interested in history or politics, do you think?

RUPP: I don't think in particular that it did. It should, but I don't think that it did. Oh, I have to tell you a funny thing here.

JOHNSON: Sure.

RUPP: Well, does the name "Fishbait" Miller ring a bell with you at all? William Miller was his right name, but they always called him "Fishbait" Miller, and he worked on the lobby door, at the other end of the Speaker's Lobby, and he later became Doorkeeper. And two people that—I was at FHA in 1937 when Joe Sinnott, the Doorkeeper, called me, and asked me whether I could

possibly come down and train this new man on the door, "Fishbait" Miller, on the Speaker's Lobby door at a Joint Session of Congress. So, I said, "Certainly," and I did. That was pretty unusual.

JOHNSON: Right, because you said you were working at the FHA at that point.

RUPP: Yeah! I wasn't even in the House.

JOHNSON: Well, they must have been impressed with how you had done your job before.

RUPP: {laughter} They never told me that. I guess I did all right.

JOHNSON: I guess so.

RUPP: So, the two men that I trained on that lobby door, one became President and one became Doorkeeper of the House.

JOHNSON: Not a bad record.

RUPP: Not too bad.

JOHNSON: No, not at all.

RUPP: Should have done more for myself. Why, in the things that I've told you about before, and I notice in the typewritten account of it, which I sent to you, the Congressman that had the man toss the gun down from the House Gallery, it's M-A-A-S [Melvin Maas]. She had written it M-O-O-S.

JOHNSON: Okay. That's fine.

RUPP: And Henry T. Rainey, a time or two, she spelled it Harry Rainey, and it's Henry T.

JOHNSON: Those are all things that we can edit when this is transcribed.

RUPP: I just thought you could make those changes ahead of time. If you wanted to.

JOHNSON: Okay.

RUPP: And then, I worked at the Agriculture Adjustment Administration in '34 and '35, after the House adjourned.

JOHNSON: Would you like to talk a little bit about that? You were working as a Page, and then when the House adjourned, you had this job?

RUPP: Yep. Lyndon Johnson got me the job.

JOHNSON: Yes. Is there anything that you'd like to add about your years as a Page?

RUPP: Well, number one, I think it's by far the most outstanding assignment that anyone can have as a young adult, either in the House or Senate. The people that you meet, and the experience that you have, in either or both chambers, is such that there wouldn't be any job in the world that would be comparable to it, and I think anybody that is assigned to a Page job in the House or the Senate has to be so fortunate that it's hardly . . . hardly any way to describe it. And I didn't work for mine. I didn't earn it. It came to me. And they very seldom do, I can tell you that. Or you already know it.

JOHNSON: What do you mean by that, because you knew the Congressman?

RUPP: Yeah, because he selected me. Well, first of all, that he had patronage to give someone a Page job. Not very many have that luxury, and secondly, why would he pick me?

JOHNSON: Well, there must have been something about you that . . .

RUPP: Well, he did come to my high school graduation. I think maybe when I sent him an invitation, that gave him an idea, that was when he was...he was assistant Majority Whip, to [Jacob Le Roy] Tuck Milligan of Missouri, at that time, and had enough seniority to get the job. Congressman Milligan, Jack [John Joseph] Cochran, and Congressman [Robert Davis] Johnson all three ran against [Harry S.] Truman in the election of '34, when Truman was elected to the Senate. And we all thought that Tuck Milligan, the Majority Whip, would be able to defeat Truman. But he didn't pull it off—defeat Truman.

Oh, did I tell you that the last time I saw Truman he was a Senator, and he came in to see my boss, the Federal Housing Administrator? I had charge of all the appointments and personnel and stuff like that. And he sat at my desk, talking to me. For quite awhile we talked, until my boss was free and could see him. And my boss died before Truman ever became President, so he never knew he became President. He was from the same state, from Missouri.

JOHNSON: Well, I have really enjoyed speaking with you. This has been a wonderful experience. Thank you so much.

RUPP: Have you got room for one more?

JOHNSON: Sure. If you have more to say.

RUPP: One day, at the administrator's office, an Afro-American man came up to me, and handed me a letter. And, I opened the letter. He had been to the White House, and he was a former classmate of President Roosevelt at Harvard, and the letter read this way, addressed to Mr. McDonald, administrator, "This will introduce Mr. So-and-so, he and I were college classmates together. I would appreciate it very much if you would, could find a job for him, in engineering at FHA at about \$2,600 per annum." That was a pretty good job in those days. You wouldn't be looking for it, would you?

JOHNSON: No. {laughter}

RUPP: I wouldn't think so. I can't think of anything else to tell you that would be of any importance that you could add to whatever you have. I know you'll have a job of taking out a lot of material that you know about. Maybe you might think is immaterial, or you don't have the space for it and so forth.

JOHNSON: Well, I just wanted to thank you again, this was very enjoyable.

RUPP: It was my pleasure, and I hope I haven't disappointed you.

JOHNSON: No, definitely not.

NOTES

¹ Originally, Mr. Rupp stated that he met with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's private secretary Margaret "Missy" LeHand, when he ran the errand for Speaker Garner. He later recalled that he spoke with President Herbert Hoover's secretary.

² Reference to the group of experts assembled by President Franklin D. Roosevelt who shaped the policies of the New Deal in an effort to combat the Great Depression.

³ From the Latin, meaning "without setting a day." A *sine die* adjournment signifies that Congress has adjourned (suspended its business) at the end of an annual or special session.

⁴ The *Resort Report* is a monthly newsletter published by Mr. Rupp's Green Valley, Arizona, retirement community, La Posada. The May 2004 issue includes an interview with Mr. Rupp that is part of the Office of the House Historian's oral history files.

⁵ Reference to the stock market crash of 1929, which precipitated the Great Depression.

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