

Donnald K. Anderson

Congresswoman Helen Meyner of New Jersey

Recollections of Congresswoman Helen Meyner of New Jersey and gender barriers in the Democratic Cloakroom.

Interview recorded October 23, 2006

Mrs. Meyner was very much at home in that very male atmosphere of the cloakroom. The ladies would come in and use the phone booths, and they would have a sandwich or a cup of coffee at the snack bar, but you never saw them sitting in the club chairs, and definitely not reclining on the couches. That simply was not a place where women went, and it was rather clear that they just weren't welcome back there, and one day Mrs. Meyner created quite a stir when she came in and took off her high-heeled shoes and stretched out on one of the couches and put a towel over her face, just like one of the guys. And there was utter shocked silence in the cloakroom. The Members were just kind of looking down the center aisle of the cloakroom, staring at her, this visage of a woman who had invaded their locker room and thought nothing of it.