

FIRST FEMALE SENATE PAGES
Oral History Interviews with
Ellen McConnell Blakeman
Paulette Desell-Lund
Julie Price

Oral History Interviews

U.S. Senate Historical Office
Washington, D.C.
December 5, 2012-April 15, 2014

Deed of Gift

I, Ellen McConnell Blakeman, do hereby give to the Senate Historical Office the recordings and transcripts of my interview on October 17, 2013.

I authorize the Senate Historical Office to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their oral history program. I also approve the deposit of the transcripts at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Senate Library, and any other institution which the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Ellen M Blakeman
Ellen McConnell Blakeman

8/25/14

Date

Accepted on behalf of the Senate Historical Office by:

Donald A Ritchie
Donald A. Ritchie

September 3, 2014
Date

Deed of Gift

I, Paulette Desell-Lund, do hereby give to the Senate Historical Office the recordings and transcripts of my interviews April 15, 2014.

I authorize the Senate Historical Office to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their oral history program. I also approve the deposit of the transcripts at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Senate Library, and any other institution which the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

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Paulette Desell-Lund

1/12/15 Date

Accepted on behalf of the Senate Historical Office by:


Donald A. Ritchie

January 21, 2015
Date

Deed of Gift

I, Julie Price, do hereby give to the Senate Historical Office the recordings and transcripts of my interview on December 5, 2012.

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In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Julie Price
Julie Price
Sept. 18 2014
Date

Accepted on behalf of the Senate Historical Office by:

Donald A. Ritchie
Donald A. Ritchie

September 22, 2014
Date

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Preface

In 1971 the Senate broke a 150-year-old tradition when it accepted female appointments to the Senate page program. Nearly a century and a half earlier, Senator Daniel Webster had selected the first male page, Grafton Hanson, the nine-year-old grandson of the Senate sergeant at arms. In 1831, the Senate added a second page—12-year-old Isaac Bassett. Beginning a tradition in which service as a page sometimes became the first step on a Senate career path, Hanson held a variety of increasingly responsible Senate jobs over the next ten years. Bassett, who is well known to students of 19th-century Senate folklore, remained in the Senate's employ for the rest of his long life.

By the 1870s, the Senate required pages to be at least 12 and no older than 16, although those limits were occasionally ignored. Until the early 1900s, pages were responsible for arranging their formal schooling during Senate recesses. In various page memoirs, there runs a common theme that no classroom could offer the educational experience available on the floor of the Senate. At Vice President Thomas Marshall's 1919 Christmas dinner for pages, 17-year-old Mark Trice explained, "a Senate page studying history and shorthand has a better opportunity than a schoolboy of learning the same subjects, because we are constantly in touch with both. We boys have an opportunity to watch the official reporters write shorthand and they will always answer questions that we do not understand, thereby making a teacher almost useless."

Though no Senate rule explicitly forbid the appointment of women, the practice of appointing male pages persisted well into the twentieth century. In the 1960s, senators began to challenge the tradition of "boys only" page appointments. In a 1961 letter to senators, Sergeant at Arms Joseph C. Duke defended the "boys only" policy, citing safety concerns and the physical demands of the job, which included carrying heavy materials and walking and running all day. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sex, as well as a grassroots movement to end gender discrimination throughout society, prompted some high school-aged girls to apply for Senate page appointments. The pressure to admit female pages continued to build, and in early 1971 the Senate Rules Committee held hearings to consider the issue.

Senators Jacob Javits of New York, Charles Percy of Illinois, and Fred Harris of Oklahoma testified on behalf of three young women they wished to sponsor. Noting that the Senate did not have a rule explicitly prohibiting the appointment of female pages, Senator Javits argued that the issue was a "question of fundamental human fairness." "I feel that in accepting girl pages to serve in the U.S. Senate," explained Senator Fred Harris, "we would be taking a symbolic step." The Senate should "end discriminatory hiring practices based on sex alone," he urged, to "serve as an example [to] employers at all levels of American industry."

After long debate and delay, the Senate finally approved a resolution allowing for the appointment of female pages on May 13, 1971. Soon thereafter, Paulette Desell, Ellen McConnell, and Julie Price made Senate history when they were sworn in as the Senate's first female pages. In these interviews, Paulette, Ellen, and Julie remember what it was like to break the gender barrier—the long waiting period between being selected by their sponsoring members until the Senate formally approved their appointment; the media attention; and their reception by the boy pages and the senators. They recall the members, staff, and other pages they got to know, as well as some of the political and policy debates that defined the era. They reflect on how their experiences as Senate pages shaped their lives.

About the interviewer: Katherine (Kate) Scott is a historian in the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the University of Washington, she received a M.A. in history from the University of New Mexico and a Ph.D. in history from Temple University. Scott is the author of *Reining in the State: Civil Society and Congress in the Vietnam and Watergate Eras* (University Press of Kansas, 2013) and other publications, including “A Safety Valve: The Truman Committee’s Oversight during World War II,” in Colton Campbell and David Auerswald, eds., *Congress and Civil-Military Relations* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015). She serves as the Vice President of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic (OHMAR). She lives in Rockville, Maryland, with her husband and two children.

ELLEN MCCONNELL BLAKEMAN
Senator Charles Percy's First Female Page, 1971
October 17, 2013

Ellen McConnell Blakeman and her friend, Sheila Sarovich, joined Kate Scott for an interview in Scott's Senate office. Blakeman brought two large scrapbooks to help narrate her experience and this interview is punctuated by turning the pages of those scrapbooks.

Scott began with the question, "How did you come to be interested in the Senate page program?"

ELLEN BLAKEMAN: My grandpa was a legislator in Springfield, Illinois. Our family made a visit and I was very interested in the pages who were working on the floor and said to myself, "That looks like a lot of fun." My family was politically-oriented, my parents were students of politics, and so that was natural. I didn't do anything about it, unlike many other pages who then instantly start stalking their representatives with letter after letter. Nothing happened until I saw this article in the local paper. Senator [Charles "Chuck"] Percy [R-IL] accepting applications for girl pages. I thought, okay, that's what I would like to do. At the time, and I'm not sure why, I obviously must have sent letters to Adlai Stevenson, who was our other senator. [Congresswoman] Charlotte Reid [R-IL]. I've got these letters in here. This is just memorabilia from what the responsibilities of pages were and what the responsibilities of the senators were. Here's the letter that I got back from Percy saying, "Here's how to apply. This is what we need from you." He also sent me this notification from the dorm, and we just drove by it, it's still there. This is the application that I submitted along with the letters of recommendation. Some time passed and this was still in the news.

KATE SCOTT: After you submitted your application, did you hear anything from him directly?

BLAKEMAN: I'd have to look at the dates of my application, December 12, I got a response in ten days saying, "You are a finalist. Call my assistant in my Chicago office and arrange for an interview." This was news about all the 10 girls who were being interviewed. I never met any of them. Here I was named one of the 10 finalists. That made news. This is my grandparents' paper. Here is Charlotte Reid saying, "I don't have a page. Maybe I will in the future." Interestingly enough, who is our friend? Kevin Conner was ultimately appointed by Charlotte Reid. After the interview, I was informed that my application had been looked upon with great favor. I should seriously think about

making a trip to Washington. In the next couple of weeks my mother and I packed for a trip that I never knew if I would make or not. The family talked endlessly, “If you go to Washington,” “What will happen when you go to Washington?” I finally said, “Stop.” It was so anxiety-producing that I finally said, “Stop talking about Washington, D.C. Just stop, stop.” While I was at school one day, Senator Percy’s office called to say that I had been selected. When I got home from school my dad had written this note and left it on the counter: “There was a call from BLEEP D.C.” [laughs] I think my brother or sister got home before I did and ran down the driveway: “There was a call from—!!”

SCOTT: Can I back up a little?

BLAKEMAN: Certainly.

SCOTT: Tell me about the interview process. What do you remember about that? That must have been incredibly intimidating.

BLAKEMAN: No, actually not. I think they wanted to see if I could speak. It was important to me to convince them that I knew how to behave. That was a big issue. Not only were the girls vulnerable, but would they go wild, which was not unheard of among the boys. I don’t remember being intimidated. I was very grateful to hear that my application had been looked on with favor. The lady was very nice. There was a press conference scheduled to announce my appointment. My dad thought it was funny that the day before my press conference, the former page Bobby Baker went to prison.

SAROVICH: So your father saves this?

BLAKEMAN: Oh yes. Oh yes, he did.

SCOTT: You mentioned that people were saying, “If you go to Washington,” or “When you go to Washington.” What did your parents think about this whole process, the fact that you were interviewing? Do you have siblings and what did they think about it?

BLAKEMAN: I have a younger brother and sister and the excitement did consume the family. My parents never expressed any reservations about going or whether this was a bad idea or good idea. We’ll get to this later, it was the era of women’s lib. It was just coming into the news. I would stress that that was not my objective at all, the interest was purely political. I know that Julie [Price] has told you the same thing, and Paulette [Desell Lund] will tell you the same thing. We just thought it would be a neat experience and we were all interested in politics.

SCOTT: Since you sent a letter of interest to the House, for you it didn't matter if it was the House or the Senate.

BLAKEMAN: No, but the correspondence is certainly much belated [with the House] after my initial interest. Why my parents didn't say, "Ellen, if you are really interested in this, why don't you start writing some letters?" That would have been like them, but I don't recall that. We have a press conference and there the pictures are taken. There are my parents. For some reason they thought it would be appropriate for me to pour him a cup of coffee. I went along with it, I don't know why.

SCOTT: Well, you are how old—17?

BLAKEMAN: I think I'm 16 at that point.

SCOTT: We should really get this on tape. When were you born?

BLAKEMAN: Nineteen-fifty-four. I was 16 and the summer before my senior year I turned 17. There will be some correspondence from the staff and Percy saying that they had a birthday party for me.

SCOTT: This is the first time that you met Senator Percy, wasn't it?

BLAKEMAN: Yes.

SCOTT: Tell me about that, what was that like?

BLAKEMAN: I don't remember, only to tell you that my parents were not Percy Republicans. They were Republicans, but they were not hugely enamored of him. They weren't donors.

SCOTT: Why not?

BLAKEMAN: I think they were more Goldwater Republicans. He was more moderate and they were more conservative. Percy was not a name that we idolized in my house. After the press conference we went to be on [the Irv Kupcincet] "Kup Show." Here's me on TV. While we were there—

SCOTT: I don't know what the "Kup Show" is.

BLAKEMAN: It was an iconic Chicago talk show on an iconic Chicago station. He also had a gossip column. I may have some clippings from his gossip column. While we were there—Percy was very media savvy and very telegenic, as you can see—while we were there he took this note. It was the instruction to ask his assistant to bring the car around for him and his wife to leave. He wrote the note. I had never been on TV before. He wrote the note and tossed it on the floor for one of the aides or production people to retrieve because he couldn't hand it to somebody while he was on the air. I was so interested in that little bit of TV savvy. It's hard to read his writing, so that's what the note says.

Here is all the publicity of that day. There is a certain sameness about it.

SCOTT: Well, you look pretty excited. Tell me about what it felt like!

BLAKEMAN: It was a big deal. I don't remember being nervous or flustered. It was just, "Okay, sit here." Amazingly, in retrospect, the staff for this entire time, the staff never sat down with me to rehearse for an interview. There were tons. I remember sitting in the press secretary's office when I arrived in Washington and she was talking to reporters from the *Tribune* and others and she just handed the phone to me. Or maybe we were on two lines and at one point one of the reporters said, "What do you look like?" [laughs] Like I'm supposed to—

SCOTT: Self describe.

BLAKEMAN: Then the press secretary stepped in and said, "Let me answer that." She became the person under whose wing I went. I was interested in PR and stuff, so that was natural.

These are all the mastheads.

SCOTT: Let's talk about the dates here. This is January 17. I know that there was a hearing, an ad-hoc committee hearing.

BLAKEMAN: Much later. We'll get to that.

SCOTT: At this point Percy thinks you are going to be a female page, and you think that. Were you aware at this point that the Senate was putting the brakes on a bit?

BLAKEMAN: No. I'll answer your question. There is a letter in here that says something like, the chance of you not being sworn in is, albeit, slim. Something like that.

Later, Percy admitted that his strategy was confrontation, to march me down to [Senate Sergeant at Arms] Robert Dunphy's office to say here she is with the credentials from Mark Trice, and swear her in.

SCOTT: "Are you really going to say no?"

BLAKEMAN: What they reasoned was that there is no rule explicitly prohibiting girls, so in the absence of that, what's the problem?

Then the delays began. "Ellen vows to fight Senate." That's a little over[stated]. "Senate rebuff."

SCOTT: Now are these mainly from local papers? *The Daily News*, that's a local paper?

BLAKEMAN: Chicago, *Chicago Today*, *Washington Post*. There is quite a range. Here is Kup. Some of them are kind of indignant.

SCOTT: Do you remember much about the interview with him? What is was like to be on TV?

BLAKEMAN: I do remember one thing. Percy kind of sandbagged me. He was first to speak. "I have chosen her. We believe she is well-qualified," and then marched down my qualifications. "She's a good student. She's an athlete. She's in 4-H." All this kind of stuff. And then Kup turned to me and wanted to know about my experience. There's nothing to be said! [All laugh] He said it all! I think that's the only time that I was flustered in a media encounter. There was literally nothing to say.

SAROVICH: He said it all!

BLAKEMAN: Yes! Anyway, here are some more editorials.

SCOTT: Let me take that as a way to talk about what kind of student you were then, as a high schooler. What kind of 4-H were you in?

BLAKEMAN: I was an "A" student and I was in a 4-H Home "Ec" [Economics] club. We did sewing and cooking. I took quite an interest in sewing and made my clothes. That was a nice outlet. I enjoyed being a competitive swimmer. I swam for the Y back in the day. At the time, the only opportunity for a girl to be in a sport was to be a cheerleader. I wanted to be athletic so we swam for the Y. That was fun. Student council.

I think Percy was quite shrewd because if you went down a list of what you want your page to be, he could check a lot of those boxes. My recommendations, I had the swim coach, the high school counselor, the minister, the people that you need. I don't remember thinking about that strategically.

SCOTT: You were 16! You weren't thinking too much about it, right?

BLAKEMAN: Anyway, we went to Washington and got turned away.

SCOTT: Did your parents come with you on this trip?

BLAKEMAN: The whole family came and dropped me off, to get me situated and moved into the dorm. We probably did some sightseeing. I'm sure we did some sightseeing. My parents and I—my brother and sister didn't go to Dunphy's office but my parents did—so there were three of us from the McConnell family who were stunned. Even the aide seemed surprised.

SCOTT: Did you speak to Dunphy yourself then? He came out to talk to you?

BLAKEMAN: Oh yes. I shook his hand.

SCOTT: He was the one who delivered the message—

BLAKEMAN: "I cannot, will not, swear you in."

SCOTT: What kind of reasons was he giving at the time?

BLAKEMAN: He was unwilling to—he came up with those reasons later. Basically he was unwilling to break a precedent himself without direction from the Senate. Then later he said, "We don't have the facilities. The work is too hard."

SCOTT: "There's crime in the city. How will they get back and forth [to and from the dorm]?"

BLAKEMAN: From Dunphy's office we went back to Percy's office. The staff said, "We are going to get this resolved in a matter of days. Stay here." I had moved in, so that made a lot of sense.

SCOTT: You moved in to the dorm anyway?

BLAKEMAN: Oh yes, oh yes, I had already moved in. Then some editorials. This all caught me off guard. Women would write to me saying, “We are so proud that you are doing this on behalf of women.” I thought, I’m not.

SCOTT: You really didn’t feel that way?

BLAKEMAN: No, not at all.

Paulette was nominated before I was. You could check Julie’s memoirs. I think that she was also nominated before I was. I was the first one turned away. There is a news article in which [Jacob] Javits’ [R-NY] staff said “We didn’t want to humiliate her [Paulette].” [Fred] Harris [R-OK] saying something along the same line about Julie.

SCOTT: That it was bad form for you to show up and then be turned away.

BLAKEMAN: Yes. Percy’s office said, “We were the first to be turned away.” [“First turned away” must have been misunderstood as “first” by the press.] Paulette took a little exception to that. She [wrote a letter to the editor stating], “Your column stating that Ellen McConnell is the first girl page. She is not, I am.” I saved that.

At one point, and this is that letter, which will perplex you, probably. At one point, someone discovered that according to the Senate rules, as a minor employee I was entitled to go to school. Percy solicited this letter confirming that I was a legitimate Senate employee and a minor, but Dunphy wouldn’t budge on [the school issue].

One of the side shows, the Rules Committee was talking about this. They spent as much time talking about what we would wear, as whether we would serve. I wasn’t aware of it at the time. I don’t know if Percy’s office was and they just didn’t tell me. Apparently at one point there was a fashion show of possible uniforms.

SCOTT: Of possible uniforms for the girl pages?

BLAKEMAN: Yes. That’s that article right there.

SCOTT: I wasn’t aware of that. I knew that there was discussion of what would they wear. I knew that there was great concern over where would they stay and how would they be more or less escorted—

BLAKEMAN: Supervised.

SCOTT: Supervised, and also this issue about their stamina. Would girls have the stamina required? Percy says in the hearing, he says something like, “I haven’t seen pages carrying more than a couple *Congressional Records*. This is a non-issue.”

BLAKEMAN: Or a breath mint, I think was his quote.

SCOTT: He backs up what you’ve said. The only real issue that he can see is that this is about tradition. We haven’t done this before and the Senate always loves and embraces its tradition so that’s why we’re not doing this.

BLAKEMAN: As a side note, I think it’s interesting that you have two Republicans championing this, and Fred Harris of course, from Oklahoma. Javits and Percy were the water bearers on this.

You can read this, the headlines really tell. Still waiting, still waiting. I had been here more than one month at this point.

SCOTT: Were you attending the school at this point?

BLAKEMAN: Oh no.

SCOTT: Were you on his staff, doing work in his office?

BLAKEMAN: I don’t remember when he put me on the payroll, when we realized it was probably going to be more than a few days. He said I will put you on my payroll as a clerk at the page salary. I went to his office and typed, filed, I was the designated messenger, of course. I would run errands around Capitol Hill. No, I wasn’t going to school. Some of these articles will say that I’m doing independent study. I don’t remember doing that.

SCOTT: Were your parents concerned with this institutional logjam? Were they wondering if they had left you here and you were never going to get in? Was there any talk with them, “Should we come back and get you? What do you want to do?”

BLAKEMAN: Yes, there was. It became more difficult as time went on. I don’t think they were ever fearful for my well-being, but I did reach the expiration date. Now let’s see, April 21. I don’t remember exactly when I came home. “Ellen faces deadline.” Okay, at a certain point at the end of February, my parents said, “You’ve got to come home.” Here I am back in school in March, they thought that I may never get back to Washington. That was very hard. I had missed a lot of school, as you can tell by the

dates. That was very daunting. While I was here I had expected any day I would go to school. One of my subjects was Spanish, so I would enlist one of the boy pages to bring me the Spanish homework. I said in the [C-SPAN show] that it was kind of like Deep Throat. We would meet in a Senate corridor and he would hand me Don Quixote, or something like that, and I would do my best to keep up. You know, I wasn't doing math, I wasn't doing science.

SCOTT: Tell me a little bit about a typical day for you at this point, before you start the page program. How much interaction did you have with the other members of Percy's staff, and then with the pages?

BLAKEMAN: Oh, a lot with Percy's staff! No interaction with pages except for this one homework page. But Percy's staff, as I also said in the [C-SPAN show], I was one of the few, maybe only, pages who ever worked in their sponsor's office [before or during the page experience] and became very close to the staff members. [Many more pages ultimately work for their sponsors after being pages, often as collegians, I believe.] In fact, there are some pictures here. You'll see a picture of me out camping. Well, Percy's executive secretary [Nadine Jacobsen] lived somewhere in Virginia or Maryland. She and her husband, I spent the weekend with them a couple times. We went out to their land or lot or something and made a fire and cooked. [Nadine was originally Percy's secretary at Bell & Howell, and followed him to D.C. She could absolutely make his signature. She told me a story about her first day at Bell & Howell, and Percy signing his name several times on a scratch pad, and tossing it over to her and saying, "Learn how to do this." "So I learned it," she said.]

SCOTT: I'm sure that they were very sorry for the delay, but also that they felt very responsible for your well-being.

BLAKEMAN: Yes. Nadine and her husband were very nice. I wouldn't have anything to do on the weekend except be in the dorm. Other than that, I worked in the office. It was fun. That was a big part of my education, too. There are things about the workings of a senator's office that you don't know until you are there.

SCOTT: What types of things do you remember learning?

BLAKEMAN: The one thing that is most prominent is the case workers. When someone says write to your senator, well, he has six people—I think it was six—on staff to help people navigate social security, veterans benefits, Medicaid, all that stuff. These people would get on the phone and talk to the senior people at social security. That was an eye-opener. The other advisors, he had the foreign affairs advisor, he had the domestic

affairs advisor, the press secretary, all the aides, the guy who opened the mail and sorted—okay, you get robo letter a, you get robo letter b. Who knew? Who knew?

[Looking at the ad-hoc committee report] I've got the testimony from all three senators. Unfortunately, Harris wasn't there. I don't think Julie was there. Paulette and I were there.

SCOTT: She told me that she wasn't at the hearing.

BLAKEMAN: Okay, here is the report. If you pull this out, and I did this during the C-SPAN thing [paper rustling].

SCOTT: Right, I love these old maps. This is the crime map.

BLAKEMAN: This is where all the pages lived and where all the crimes were. That was appended to this report.

SCOTT: I can remember that Percy made the point in his testimony: "Somebody was just killed in a monastery. There are crimes happening all over the place. It's happening all over Chicago."

Did you grow up in Chicago?

BLAKEMAN: Northwest suburbs.

SCOTT: Northwest suburbs. Where specifically?

BLAKEMAN: Dundee, which is halfway between Chicago and Rockford [paper rustling].

We have the hearing and then the report is issued and then nothing happens. You would think something would happen. I say that naively knowing what ultimately was going to have to happen.

SCOTT: Who is saving all the clippings for you, by the way, at the time? Your parents?

BLAKEMAN: My mom and me. We're still going on. [Reading headlines:] "Puts off. Shuns. Lib lagging. All but give up." I don't remember that exactly. All three of us are in limbo.

SCOTT: You met Paulette at the hearing? Or maybe earlier?

BLAKEMAN: We had phone called a few times, but never face to face. She was still in her high school in Alexandria.

SCOTT: Right, she lived here in Washington, that's what I remember.

BLAKEMAN: At one point there was a TV feature on us. I don't know, they had footage of me marching up to the Senate office building and Paulette playing the flute in her band. It was pretty cute.

Now here is something, Percy signed this clipping. "Opposed by Byrd," I guess that would be Robert Byrd [D-WV], who was the whip.

You look at these headlines and read whatever articles you want.

This was cute—

SCOTT: "First page girl goes home."

BLAKEMAN: I know, that was so sad. Will Ellen ever set foot on the floor?

SCOTT: Was that your sense of it, too, going home? I might not be back.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, even though the hearing had been held. They still had to vote on it and there was, I think—a lot of their attitude was ignore it or delay it until it goes away! You'll see a clipping of a hopeful girl page, many years my senior, who went through the process and was rebuffed. She came and interviewed the three of us, reliving memories. "I tried, I didn't make it. You guys did."

You'll read this as kind of amusing, a memo from Percy's press secretary saying the strategy to get you to be a page before you are 65!

SCOTT: What was the reception? How were you received by folks on his staff and other people in the institution? If they saw you walking, running a message for him or taking something around for him, did people stop you? I know that happens later on. Did they do that with you at this point? You would have been so unusual in the institution at that point. Everybody must have known who you were.

BLAKEMAN: I don't think so. I would not have been dressed in page attire, just business office attire. I don't recall ever being stopped. Later when we are in the uniform, I was stopped.

Legislation, Percy submitted a resolution, which I should have realized at the time that the committee wasn't going to act without legislation. This took a long time to introduce. Part and parcel with news about Washington, there were these photos about pages in the Wisconsin general assembly, and what they were wearing. I thought it was kind of cute.

[Reading articles:] "Fight, fight, fight." This must be his press release—"has joined in sponsoring a resolution." I don't remember what this press conference was exactly. Somehow all three of us came to Washington and we are at a press conference where we talked. The three of us were asked questions. Julie, I don't remember this, but Julie says that she became tongue-tied and Paulette Desell became tongue-tied and I stepped right up and said something, which embarrasses me, but I probably did. This may have been the first time that I actually met Julie. This is the AP report saying, "The Rules Committee sanctioned today the appointment of girl pages." That's kind of cool.

SAROVICH: What is the date on that?

BLAKEMAN: It doesn't have a date. Someone must have clipped it and sent it to me, maybe Percy's staff.

Back in the day, in the hallway behind the Senate floor, we had news tickers [AP, UPI]. One of our duties was to check the tickers every once in a while and pin them up on a cork board of some kind. Of course, now they don't have tickers any more.

They vote. I don't know if these are exact, but the ad hoc subcommittee voted first and then it went to the Rules Committee and then it went to the Senate floor.

SCOTT: There's an article that says it will be okay if they wear pants. This issue is finally resolved.

BLAKEMAN: Well, you are more conversant. It's a voice vote. I said in C-SPAN that I wish I had been on the floor because the pages always voted too. If there was a voice vote, we always voted. Sometimes the presiding officer would look over at us—where did that noise come from? I'm sure the pages voted on this, too! Then the swearing-in. Here is the recording made at the swearing-in. I don't have the recording but I have the memo that goes with it.

SCOTT: Let's talk about the swearing-in. What was that like after all this time? You had gone back to Illinois, and then you came back?

BLAKEMAN: I came back for this. I believe only a week elapsed from the Senate floor vote to when we were actually sworn in. Julie was still in Oklahoma. Paulette was local. I came in. We went to Javits' office and did this.

SCOTT: There is that photo. I have a little different photo here.

BLAKEMAN: Same photo, it's just cropped differently. This guy was from Dunphy's office. Dunphy didn't come and do it. I don't know if that was sending a message, or what.

SCOTT: The photo is in Javits' office?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, and after the fact someone reported to me that there was maybe a little dust-up, that Javits had misled me and where the swearing-in was going to be thinking that it would be a sabotage so I wouldn't be there and it would just be Paulette. I don't remember that at all. If you ever ask Paulette about it, hopefully that's not true. I can't believe Javits would do that.

SCOTT: I had heard a story, or maybe I read a news account, that the two of you were here on the same day, May 14, and Julie came and was sworn in the following Monday. The three of you were here at the same time. But there was something about that first day, something about someone going to the Disbursing Office versus someone going right down to the floor, so technically one person was on the books before the other one. This is what the media wanted to report on, who was the first page?

BLAKEMAN: I can tell you exactly what happened. After we were sworn in, Paulette, accompanied by Javits, went to the floor and was the first girl to step foot on the floor. That weekend, Percy had a group of Illinois Republicans in town and they were going to the White House. I knew that I had to go back to school to finish the last two weeks of my junior year. He did not take me to the floor. I did not go to the Disbursing Office. I went to the White House. All these Republicans and my family (my parents, and brother and sister) got on the bus, went to the White House and went to the Rose Garden. Because of what had just happened, all the people kind of pushed us [my family and me] to the front.

SCOTT: This is the same day you were sworn in. Then you end up in the Rose Garden at the White House.

BLAKEMAN: Here we are. I got pushed to the front. I have a better photo in the back.

SCOTT: And there's President Nixon!

BLAKEMAN: I think this must be some other Republicans. There is my brother and there's my sister. That is my mom and my dad. Do you think that this was our Christmas card!? [laughs] If you do, you're right.

SCOTT: Were your parents Nixon supporters? Or was he too moderate for them?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, they were Nixon supporters.

SCOTT: In other words, that was quite an experience for everyone.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, and the Watergate break-in didn't occur until almost a year later. Although in retrospect we knew that high-jinx were in the works.

SCOTT: Did you meet the president? Were you formally introduced to him?

BLAKEMAN: I don't remember if I shook his hand or not.

SCOTT: Were you awe-struck? Impressed by this? Or does nothing impress you at 16?

BLAKEMAN: I thought it was a pretty big deal. Yes, I thought it was a pretty big deal.

SCOTT: First girl page and in the same day down to the White House.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, yes. I am not wearing the official uniform. I'm wearing something that I made and thought it would be appropriate.

These reports are about Paulette's first few minutes on the floor and they are a little snarky. "Nervous on her first day." "Talks, misses first cue." She sat down and someone snapped and she was [talking] so that's the gist of the story. I love her dearly.

This is a shrunk down photo that the swearing-in guy signed and Percy also signed it. That was pretty cool.

How are we doing on time?

SCOTT: I have as much time as you'd like to give me. It's really up to you. I'm delighted that you are here.

BLAKEMAN: Fine. If you don't mind, if I leave this with you then you'll have time to look at the articles and see if the headlines intrigue you.

SCOTT: I think there will be several newspaper articles here and some photos that we'll like to make copies of just for our records.

BLAKEMAN: Okay, during, there continued to be stories, "Senate girl pages understand women's lib now."

SCOTT: I have read quite a few of those types of articles and it made me wonder—you are suggesting, and you are not the first one to suggest to me, that you did not feel that you were part of the larger women's lib movement. But then I've also had a couple people say that they ran into stuff within the institution that made them just think a little bit about those issues.

BLAKEMAN: You have characterized it correctly. It was an eye-opener. Once I was on the job, I never felt second-class or discriminated against. But it did put the bigger issue into perspective. A lot of time passed here, too. From the time it started in January 1971 to the time that I finally went home, January 1972, the women's liberation movement changed a lot of things. You can't be immune to it. But we were never interested in being enlisted as spear carriers. I guess that's the way—

Okay, things are going great, the boys treat us great. Here's the article, you can take it out or not, and unfold it, about the girl who tried to be a page and couldn't. She interviewed all three of us. It was kind of a cute article, poignant, very poignant.

SCOTT: What was a typical day like for you once your page assignment officially started? What do you remember about it?

BLAKEMAN: We started during the summer, of course, when there wasn't school. We'd report. There were duties on the floor. We would have to set up everybody's desk and the documents had to be set in a specific order, in the order that the

legislation would be considered. On the bottom, I believe, was the *Congressional Record* from the day before, and then there would be the bills, the hearings, the reports, all of the pertinent paperwork. That would be organized by a page, a floor boy. There were certain pages who were promoted to this position of some responsibility, where the night before they would listen to Senator Byrd say, "By unanimous consent this is what we'll do. The debate will be limited to 30 minutes equally divided." The floor boys would take notes and then give us instructions the next day about how the desks were to be set up. That was given. Then the session would start and we would sit on the steps just like they do now, I think, and move up in the queue. The first page would answer the next snap or the next trip, or whatever. Then you come back and get to the end and work your way up.

SCOTT: You were also attending page school? Not during the summer.

BLAKEMAN: Not during the summer. It must have been during the 4th of July weekend, I came home and I appeared on a TV show. I celebrated a birthday. Here is the calendar from my birthday. The high school wanted me to be the honorary homecoming queen. They wanted Percy to come and he writes back and says, thanks, but I can't. During this time I was in *Seventeen*.

SCOTT: You were profiled in *Seventeen* magazine?

BLAKEMAN: Yes.

SCOTT: Now, you are acting like all of this is no big deal!

SAROVICH: She is always like this.

SCOTT: Can you try to give me a sense for what you felt at the time about doing interviews like that? What was going through your mind at the time about this experience and this high profile?

BLAKEMAN: I thought the opportunity was pretty neat.

Where did that other *Seventeen* article go? I remember being pretty nonplussed by it. I was never supervised on an interview. I think for maybe this *Seventeen* interview that is coming up the reporter (I don't remember if it was a girl or a guy) met me at the dorm and I said, "Let's walk over to the fountains and sit and talk." That's what we did. Again, I find it a little bit amazing that I was never given any spokesperson training. Or, "watch out for this question." We are so sensitive to that now. Now the pages aren't allowed to give interviews at all.

SCOTT: What was your dorm like? What was it like to live in the dorm?

BLAKEMAN: It was nice. I had a room by myself and a bathroom down the hall shared with other girls, and a cafeteria that served a couple meals. When I worked late I could call the dorm and say, "Set aside a plate for me," so when I got home it would be there."

SCOTT: That's nice. The other women, what kinds of work were they doing?
[They worked] predominantly on the Hill?

BLAKEMAN: A lot of FBI secretaries because that was J. Edgar Hoover's rule, they had to live in approved housing for a period of time until they were given permission to get an apartment.

SCOTT: Maybe until they were married?

BLAKEMAN: That could be, but that was the rule. There were other young ladies who worked on the Hill. Most of them were older than me, I was just in high school. Most of them were older than me. I made some very good friends. This was also a time, one of my friends was an FBI secretary, this was a time when Hoover's rule was that the supervisor had to record how many times the secretary wore pants to work. I can't make this up!

SCOTT: You wouldn't even imagine something like that could be possible.

BLAKEMAN: It was.

SCOTT: How did you get your page uniform?

BLAKEMAN: I made it. They said a black or navy blue pants suit and a white shirt. So I made a couple.

SCOTT: Did you bring your sewing machine here?

BLAKEMAN: I must have made them in that short period of time between swearing-in and actually starting to work. Polyester, as was the fashion.

SCOTT: What kind of shoes?

BLAKEMAN: Flat shoes.

SCOTT: Black, I imagine.

BLAKEMAN: Or blue, something like that.

Much to my surprise, during the summer, it was jackets off. I had made some elastic band pants, which you never really wear without a jacket on. I was horrified to discover it was jackets off. I have some pictures of those beauties. During the winter, at some point Julie went home and Senator [Daniel] Inouye [D-HI] appointed Mari [Iwashita] and I don't know who appointed Barb [Wheeler], but this is—

SCOTT: It was Senator Harris.

BLAKEMAN: Oh, okay, replaced Julie. Then Julie came back.

SCOTT: Julie came back the next year.

BLAKEMAN: Julie came back. Okay, here is the other *Seventeen*. So [for this photo] they hauled us out on the steps and it was pretty cold, I remember. They took our picture and then it was everywhere. Someone called me and said, “What’s it like?”

SCOTT: Tell me about your impressions of the members. You are 16 and some of these members are very well known, on television or otherwise. A lot of people mention Senator [Edward] Kennedy [D-MA], for example, because he had presidential ambitions and he was from the Kennedy family. That sticks in a lot of people’s minds. Were there individuals who you were greatly impressed by?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, certainly our sponsoring senators we held in very high esteem. I remember [George] McGovern [D-SD] and [Mark] Hatfield [R-OR] because of the McGovern-Hatfield Vietnam amendment. I believe Bob Dole [R-KS] may have been a freshman. I remember him seated at the back, on the end. [Majority Leader] Mike Mansfield [D-MT], I don't really remember too many of the Democrats. I do remember at one point Kennedy was presiding and one of us had to go up to him and say, “Eunice Shriver is in the gallery.” He said something like, “What am I going to do with her.” [Scott laughs]

SCOTT: Would that kind of stuff be passed among the pages?

BLAKEMAN: Well, we could all hear it! Strom Thurmond [R-SC] sat right in the front. I have a funny story to tell about him. He used to appoint pages for 60 days, so there would be a constant turnover of pages. They all seemed to be sons of newspaper editors. How South Carolina can have that many papers boggles my mind. But that was my impression. Strom would get up, he was in the front row, and he would often go down the row. “Whose page are you?” Whose page are you? Whose page are you?” You’d say, “Percy,” “Javits,” “Weicker,” stuff like that. One day he got to his own page, “And whose page are you?” The kid said, “I’m your page, sir.” He said, “Of course you are, son.” It was priceless.

Watching Senator Byrd act was unbelievable. Mike Mansfield was always a command presence. One of the appointments that we considered was Earl Butz, the secretary of agriculture, and the Senate was balking. Mansfield said, “Let’s get a move on here or the papers are going to write, ‘Senate sits on Butz.’” [All laugh] There was a procedural issue for the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] and I don’t remember what it was, but again, the Senate was balking. He begged, he said, “Please, please act on this. Get the ladies off my back!” [All laugh] Little stuff like that. Senator [John] Tower [R-TX] always had a [breath freshening spray]. He was always spraying. [Robert] Packwood [R-OR] met an unfortunate demise, but he was very nice, friendly to the pages. He would always say “hi” when we ran into each other in the hall. This was—I never regarded it as flirtatious, but friendly—he would say, “What are you doing this weekend?” “I’m going on a picnic.” “Okay, have fun!” That sort of thing. He was nice. Hatfield was always extremely well dressed, which I noticed because I was into sewing. I would notice the men’s suits which were impeccably tailored. Edward Brooke [R-MA] was a senator then. He was quite impressive, also very dapper. I don’t remember any that regarded, well, there were a couple that we regarded as dim bulbs. Their names will go unmentioned. The young people had an acute sense of who was a good legislator and who was not. I think in a lot of things, when you are talking about the high school basketball team or the U.S. Senate, you can’t fool the kids. The kids know. Julie has remarked on that previously, too.

SCOTT: There were standouts.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, and some who would always say the dumbest things, the dumbest things. And some who had issues that they just wouldn’t let go. Here you are talking about Rhodesia again—that’s when it was called Rhodesia.

SCOTT: You mentioned the McGovern-Hatfield amendment. That is so much a part of this era, that ongoing debate over Vietnam, and the protests are still all over the Capitol. Were you thinking about those types of things? Were you political in the sense

that you were developing a political consciousness about where you stood on these issues? Or were you just taking it all in?

BLAKEMAN: We were doing more than taking it in. My observation was that most pages adopted the positions of either their sponsor or certainly their party. Now in my case, Percy was a moderate Republican and an early opponent of the Vietnam War so that was an easy position to take. A couple other pieces of legislation that I remember were the Lockheed Aircraft loan. That was fiercely partisan, with the Republicans in favor, which is funny to reflect now, as I said in the C-SPAN interview, how times have changed. The Republicans were all in favor of that business stimulus, but now, TARP—forget it! Detroit—forget it! Then conversely, the campaign check-off law, \$3 from your [tax return]—and that was also fiercely partisan. Again, how times have changed. The candidates won't even take the money. But at the time the Democrats needed the money and the Republicans didn't. I don't remember specifically my opinion about that. We also had two Supreme Court nominees, [William] Rehnquist and [Lewis] Powell. Earl Butz was confirmed. Of course, this was before Bork, so the Supreme Court, that was—

SCOTT: They treated the nominations differently.

BLAKEMAN: This was cool. I got named a floor boy.

SAROVICH: Did they change it to floor girl, or no?

SCOTT: Did they at least alter the title?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, they changed it to floor assistant. That was pretty cool.

SCOTT: Tell me how that changed your life. What else were you doing then? You were the person listening to Byrd give the run down.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, and the next day saying here's the order that the stuff goes in. It was pretty cool, very cool. It was a nice honor that not everybody got, being singled out by the people in the cloakroom. Then—talk about opportunist—my representative Bob McClory called me in and wanted me to pose in this picture with his nominating petitions. I really felt like I had been used. I didn't know if I was even going to vote for him. [Scott laughs] I'm in this picture so that he can write my name in the caption and it goes in the Dundee paper. Oh well.

SCOTT: This paper is December of 1971, so you are in school, you are in Page School. What was that like? Tell me a little about that.

BLAKEMAN: It was not very challenging. As a senior, I only had to take two classes, so that's all I took, English and economics, which was required by my high school. Where the other young people were taking math and science and in some cases languages, I was spared that. It was a pretty easy time.

Here's a telegram that I got from Percy about my grades. They would share our grades. He gets it wrong, he said two As and a B. Well I only took two classes. I did get a B in economics, I have to say. The hours were long, but because of what was going on, as you alluded to with the Vietnam War, the Senate hours were very long and we were reporting very early so we might have—we started school at 6:15, we got out at 8:15, we might have 15-minute classes because they couldn't lop our breakfast half hour. You don't accomplish much in a classroom in 15 minutes.

SCOTT: Did you have homework regularly?

BLAKEMAN: I think we had homework. I don't know how the teachers did that. It just wasn't very hard. The teachers, the school was poorly managed and poorly staffed. Even though being a page teacher was supposed to be such a feather in your cap, because it was prestigious, the hours weren't long. I think my economics teacher was pretty good. My English teacher was hopeless.

SCOTT: Were you at this time, since it's your senior year, thinking about college as well?

BLAKEMAN: Oh yes. Sheila and I both went to the University of Illinois. With the early application and acceptance procedure, I applied and by Thanksgiving I knew I was going. So while the other pages were sweating over their applications to Yale and Harvard, and stuff like that, that was a non-issue. It was a big relief.

SCOTT: I'll bet. That's not something that you would have wanted to consider, with the long hours that you had to maintain and the mediocrity of the Page School—

BLAKEMAN: They are writing essays and filling out applications. They are all going to East Coast schools. Many could never understand why I wanted to go to U of I. "Why don't you go to Smith or someplace like that?" Well, they've got a college of communications there [at Illinois], it's three hours away, what's not to like?

SCOTT: It's an excellent school, I don't know that it had the same reputation then, but today it's an excellent school.

SAROVICH: Probably not as much, but liberal arts, you went into liberal arts or communications, that was good. That was very good back then.

BLAKEMAN: Liberal arts, yes.

That's the funny line from the movie "Risky Business": "Here I come, U of I!" When he thinks he's going to be turned down for Princeton.

SCOTT: Let's back up. You said you already knew that's what you wanted to do. Does the Senate experience just further strengthen that conviction? Did you come in knowing that's what you wanted to do? Did you learn more about it while you were here?

BLAKEMAN: I learned more about it. Certainly, I was very impressed by the job that the press secretary had. That opened up a whole new thought process, but it was still baseline communications. Originally I thought that maybe I would marry it to home ec, sewing or something like that, but that certainly broadened the options. That was a good experience.

At one point, a journalist must have submitted a manuscript to Robert Dunphy. He wrote down, "copy for Ellen McConnell" and must have sent it down to the cloakroom, which I thought was kind of weird. The final thing that I did was the State of the Union in January '72, that was the last big thing and that was pretty cool. Here's the photo and all the pages hung out on the banister back there. From the Republican newsletter, I saved the whole thing because I thought it was interesting to consider the legislation that was being considered at the time, the draft. The year in pictures.

SAROVICH: I didn't know this! You hid this one from me.

BLAKEMAN: I forgot I had it. I'll tell you something hugely embarrassing about that picture. Percy always wanted to do this [motions with both hand over head in v shape]. He did it with me several times. I must have been—I don't know why I was wearing this dress. It's not a page uniform. But you can see how short it is. He wanted to lift my hands and I didn't know how to say no.

SCOTT: It looks all right.

BLAKEMAN: It doesn't look as bad as I thought at the time. I just didn't know what to do.

SCOTT: That's back in the era where someone couldn't show you the picture instantly, either, so you couldn't know what it was ultimately going to look like.

BLAKEMAN: That's true. Here is some—Billie Jean King, other women, in the year in pictures.

SCOTT: That's really remarkable. This is *Life* [Magazine] and here's a photo of you with others, "A flock of first ladies, and maybe Ms. President." Billie Jean. That's a big deal.

BLAKEMAN: If you want to pull this out, we folded up the caption. A lot of these pages are folded. I forgot about that.

SCOTT: When I talked to Julie, I don't know that she had as much interaction with her sponsor as you did. It sounds like you met with [Senator Percy] several times.

BLAKEMAN: I'll tell you something unbelievable, a couple things unbelievable. I spent the night at his house a couple times.

SCOTT: Did you really? For what reason? Here in Washington?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, he had a house in Georgetown and once I went over and had dinner with his daughter, Gayle, and Senator Percy.

SCOTT: She was just your age, wasn't she?

BLAKEMAN: She was maybe a year or two older, and one of her girlfriends and then we went out to the movies, to see "Women in Love," if you can imagine. Then we came back and slept at the house. Another time Percy invited me over. I don't know if it was to have been a trip to Wolf Trap Farm, or something like that, but the Senate was late. That got scuttled, but he said, well, you were going to spend the night anyway, let's go. We went over and he put me in Gayle's room and the next morning we got up and had a swim and went to work. Can you imagine that happening in this day and age? I'm sure Lorraine was not around. I don't remember if I ever met her, maybe at a Christmas party.

SCOTT: Would you be in his car? Did he have a driver? Did he drive himself?

BLAKEMAN: He drove himself, and very fast!

SCOTT: You would ride with him?

BLAKEMAN: Yes! He didn't have a driver. He had a Maserati, or something like that. It was a pretty fancy car.

SCOTT: How often do you talk to your parents at this point? Do you catch up with them once a week or something?

BLAKEMAN: Probably. The Percy people, because I had worked in their office, I had a key. I could come in on the weekends and use the WATS line.¹ Is that dated or what? Of course, I didn't have a phone number at the dorm but I had a phone and there was a switchboard. They would switch calls in.

SCOTT: How often did you go home? For the holidays, I imagine.

BLAKEMAN: Fourth of July, probably. August break. Thanksgiving, I'm sure I went home for Thanksgiving. Christmas, whenever there was a recess. Not other occasions. If they were working, we were working.

There's a picture of the pages. Here I'm not wearing the official page uniform. I'm not sure how I got away with that. There's Paulette, and Michael Johnson, who is now an official.

SCOTT: He's an assistant to the sergeant at arms, I believe.

BLAKEMAN: That's sounds right. This was Kennedy's page. Other names that you won't, this was the Deep Throat page [Scott laughs], Tommy Gonzalez. There's Mari Iwashita.

Here's a funny thing that they wrote up for my birthday.

SCOTT: The pages?

BLAKEMAN: No, Percy's staff. You should read it, it's pretty funny. [They were] making great emphasis on all of the typos in all of the articles. Helen O'Connell of Dundee, D-U-N-D-I-E. I hope you'll read it, it's very funny. Percy couldn't make it to the birthday party, but he sent his regrets. Percy would have had a Christmas Party and even though I was on the floor and not on his staff, I was invited and I got a gift.

¹ Wide Area Telephone Service, a telephone line that provided long distance service at fixed rates.

I don't know what this is, but I can't bear to throw it away. I must have been with Percy when he was making remarks. His writing is very difficult to read. It's not dated. I can't tell from the legislation he's describing, where it goes. But as I say, I couldn't bear to throw it away.

Page School, we had directories so we knew where everybody lived. We had our portraits taken for the yearbook. Some of my mischievous page friends autographed the back of my book cover. USP? U.S. Page, I guess. They must have taken my book away and just decided to draw on it.

The rule was that you could only be in the yearbook if you were there second semester. I was only there first semester, which was keenly disappointing to me. I really wanted to be in the yearbook. Paulette Desell, bless her heart, took it upon herself to circulate a petition asking that I be included in the yearbook. It didn't happen, but this I also can't throw away. There are so many people's names that I remember and I have their signatures right here.

SAROVICH: That is so sweet.

BLAKEMAN: Isn't that cute? But that explains why Julie, who was there second semester, is in the yearbook and I'm not.

Here's the end. My term ends and here's the next boy who came after me. He gets his dream. This is more of the end, congratulations. There's a pay stub. These are in the wrong place. First Senate page put to work. Yes, this is in the wrong date. These are all May. When I get this back, that will have to be moved.

SCOTT: Can you tell me about some of the duties you would be doing? After you set up the desks in the morning, once the Senate floor action was under way, what types of things did you do?

BLAKEMAN: When a senator stood up to speak we would automatically get water. We would have to remember what kind of water they wanted. [Barry] Goldwater [R-AZ] wanted bubbly. He wanted carbonated water. When you walked up to him he would say, "Bubbly," and we would say, "We know." When we had our tour last spring I saw in the cloakroom posted all of the beverage choices. Senator X gets this. Tea, of course, there are many more than there used to be. We would run trips. Check the ticker. Frequently on Friday afternoons the leadership would send out an "all senators," so we would have to distribute a memo to all the Republican senators. It would always be late on a Friday afternoon. We had to go around. As you know, the senators' offices are not

[right next to each other]. You are going back and forth. We only had two buildings to contend with then. I'm sure it's even more time consuming now. I also don't remember if we divided it up. We probably should have. "You do one office building." The abbreviation S.O.B. You do all O.S.O.B and I'll do all N.S.O.B. We should have done that. The cloakroom should have insisted on it, but I don't think we did.

SCOTT: Did you work much with the cloakroom staff? Did you develop a close relationship with them?

BLAKEMAN: They were the ones who were sending us out on trips. Sometimes it was delivering flags. Sometimes it was delivering from Percy's office to Javits' office. Sometimes we went to the House. Each trip would be documented, "Office A to Office B," we would have the trip slip and when we came back and it was completed, we would sign it, and then file it. One of the pages with whom I worked managed to insinuate himself into the cloakroom. He was on behind the desks answering phones while the rest of us were running around. Kirby was good that way. He had a little less physical exertion than the rest of us. The cloakroom was in charge, we would occasionally, on Saturdays when we'd have to work, even though the Senate wasn't in session, that's where we'd hang out and we could read, do homework, if we wanted.

I remember the movie actress who was in—Jennifer Jones—showed up one Saturday at the cloakroom, being escorted by someone. I didn't know who she was. She's a famous movie actress. "The Song of Bernadette," does that ring a bell? Something like that. I thought, oh, okay. There you are. I was trying not to be disrespectful. There was one funny time with Percy. He was supposed to be in Chicago, I think, giving a speech. The Senate's business was delayed so he was still there. He ended up giving his speech from a telephone booth in the cloakroom, much to the hilarity of all the other pages. At that point he was developing a little kind of a hearing problem, not debilitating, but you notice he spoke a little more loudly than you would [expect] so he's on the phone [shouting] DELIVERING THE SPEECH and the door is kind of open. The pages just thought that was the funniest thing. Julie tells a story about Percy too. We were on TV, maybe we were recorded at the Senate TV studio—

SCOTT: Recording Studio.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, being the media savvy politician that he was, and businessman, he had makeup on. Julie thought that was the first time she had ever seen a man wear makeup and she thought that was just incredible. It's so memorable that she tells the story to this day: "Percy was wearing makeup!"

[Talking about scrapbooks] This is all out of order. May 19. It's in the wrong place. This is all in the wrong place.

SAROVICH: Do you think they are duplicates?

BLAKEMAN: No, I don't. I plead being overwhelmed.

SCOTT: Are you a registered Republican, at this point, do you think?

BLAKEMAN: In Illinois you don't have to declare.

SCOTT: In the '72 election did you vote for President Nixon?

BLAKEMAN: Yes.

I'm sorry. I wonder if we should sort through this and bring it back?

SCOTT: Okay, do you want me to turn this off for a sec?

BLAKEMAN: No, I mean Sheila and I, when we're done would go out and sort and give you something that's intact.

SCOTT: Okay.

SAROVICH: It's all together. I think it needs to move.

BLAKEMAN: I'm sorry.

SCOTT: That's okay, no need to apologize.

SAROVICH: This belongs really in the other book.

BLAKEMAN: No, this was the final insult from Robert Dunphy. "My records indicate that you did not turn in your Senate ID card." Am I going to do that? He asked me to send it back by return mail. I'm not going to do that! I don't know where the card is now, but I was not going to give him the satisfaction of sending it back.

SCOTT: What was the security like around here then? What do you remember about Senate security and the Capitol Police?

BLAKEMAN: I remember a police presence, not being overwhelmed, in the building. I don't remember a police presence out on the street. One of the rules was that I had to be escorted, and there was a page, Joe Doss, who lived around the corner from me with his mother. He would walk by the dorm and I would wait by the front door until the white shirt walked by and then walk with him. At night, I'm guessing he and I were probably dismissed at the same time so the same thing could happen. I don't remember ever asking a policeman to take me home, maybe I did, I don't remember.

SCOTT: Did you do sightseeing on the weekends, if you weren't visiting with friends or something? Would you go around and look at things?

BLAKEMAN: A little bit. I think the Smithsonian was a fun destination, especially the first ladies' dresses. I never tired of looking at that. I don't remember much other sightseeing. I think we were probably tired on the weekends, especially getting up that early for school. It was dark. Now, I stand corrected a little bit. Once school started there was some weekend socializing with other pages. We would go to a restaurant or go to a library and do homework, go out to brunch. It was teenage socializing. Sometimes I would walk downtown and go to Woody's. It took a couple weekends for me to figure out how to manage my money over the weekend. The dorm served Sunday breakfast, but that was it. I don't know what they did on Saturday. One of my first weekends I caught myself with no money and no food. That was pretty painful. But I learned to never let that—I'm going all over town trying to cash a check, which couldn't happen. I don't know how I managed, but it only happened once.

SCOTT: Pages were pretty well paid, weren't they?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, more than \$7,000 a year. There are a couple articles in here with people complaining about that. You are 16, 17 years old. Of course, you had all your expenses too. Your uniform, your dorm, buying your books.

This is after [my page service], I went to the Kane County Fair with Percy and registered to vote.

SAROVICH: He really did capitalize.

BLAKEMAN: Oh yes. He said in my birthday tribute his press secretary notes that I generated a lot of positive publicity and much safer than being shot at in Vietnam. I'm telling the story about a practical joke that was played on me.

SCOTT: Bill stretcher?

BLAKEMAN: Yes. That summer after I graduated from high school I worked in Percy's office and got to go to the convention, which was fun. I would say—

SCOTT: That's interesting. Julie also went to the convention; she went to the Democratic Convention.

BLAKEMAN: She was a delegate, I was a page, which is why I was wearing that and the Nixon button.

SCOTT: Well, you have to tell me about that, what was that like?

BLAKEMAN: Well, it was four more years. He was running for reelection. [Chanting] "Four more years! Four more years!" This was August, the Watergate break-in had occurred. No one knew the extent of the malfeasance.

SCOTT: It happened in June, so there hadn't been too much coverage yet.

BLAKEMAN: Right. It was very interesting to be there. I confess that I shirked my duties.

SCOTT: In what way, what did you do instead?

BLAKEMAN: There would be a page headquarters of some kind and they would field phone calls from people back home who wanted to get a message to delegate "x." We were supposed to go to that state's delegation seating area and try to find delegate "x." Impossible! The person wouldn't be there. I think I just quit reporting back to headquarters and just walked around and listened to the speeches and soaked it in. W. Clement Stone had a reception for the Illinois Republicans at a hotel, pool-side with great food and he greeted everybody. Did he have a cosmetic company? Or toiletries or something? He handed out tchotchkes, everybody got a little party bag. I hung out with other Percy staff members who were there.

SCOTT: Those you knew from Washington?

BLAKEMAN: Oh yes, roomed with Nadine Jacobsen, the executive secretary. It was a great time. There were other young Republican organizations that were having parties, kegs, stuff like that. Of course I wasn't old enough for any of that, but I'm sure I went to some of it. [All laugh] It was fun. We flew on the plane with the Illinois delegation, we were all on the same plane. It was fun. Then [I] go back to start college.

Every once in a while I would get letters from girls who wanted to be pages. I don't remember if I responded. There wasn't much I could do. "Write to your senator." I don't know you. I'm not going to put in a good word for you. One of my swim teammates really wanted to be a page. I think I did put in a good word for her because she was a good, solid girl. The problem was you are appointing two girls from basically the same part of the state. Does that make sense politically? I never had the heart to tell Debbie Davie that I didn't think it was going to happen. Years later, I worked at a PR agency. Percy visited my high school. Someone in his office said, "Wasn't that where Ellen went? Could we find her, get her to come and sit on the stage with Percy for the visit?" Well, it all came together and I did and that was pretty fun.

Here are some pictures, more "Dear Ellen, I want to be a page," letters. Dundee High School. Set to visit school. That was pretty cool. This must be part of an appearance he made either at the school, or—this is also in the wrong place too. We're going to have to do some—

Then in college it happened that there were two girls in the same sorority that were pages.

SAROVICH: Who was the other?

BLAKEMAN: This says Jean Harris, but it was Amy Hunt. I think Jean, maybe Jean was a page at Springfield.

SCOTT: You were a Tri-Delt?

BLAKEMAN: Yes.

Years later there is more about pages in *Seventeen*. This is just pictures, I see you have that same one.

Paulette and I have our pictures in here. This was cool. While we were there they took an official Senate portrait. That's me right in the front. That was a little dicey because we all wanted to be in the picture and when you are in the front you are the next one to do a trip. I got up to the front and thought, "Oh, please don't send me on a trip."

SCOTT: "I've got the best spot!"

BLAKEMAN: “I want to be in the photo!” They took it from the Republican side. You see the poor Democratic pages are doing like that [craning their necks to be seen]. Then we’ve had some reunions and this is memorabilia.

SCOTT: How did you get involved with the Capitol Page School Alumni Association? What brought you to that group?

BLAKEMAN: I was in the database of former pages. I was contacted that way and joined. Since then I have been asked to be on the board. I was flattered to be asked and eagerly agreed. That’s what brings me here.

SCOTT: That’s how we lucked out and got an interview with you!

BLAKEMAN: Finally, Percy dies, it was 2011. He was in his 90s and had been suffering from Alzheimer’s. After I left Washington I really didn’t have any contact with him at all, more his staff. A couple years ago when I was coming here I wanted to get with his press secretary. I’m not sure what happened. I reached out to her and she never got back to me. I’m not sure how to interpret that.

It [lists] of a lot of achievements of his, none of them are girl pages.

SCOTT: Is that right?

BLAKEMAN: Now, these pictures, some are duplicates. If I have dupes, I brought both of them and I will tell you if you just want to take one for yourself, take it. These are duplicates.

SCOTT: Our photo historian would be thrilled to have these.

BLAKEMAN: Now here I have a triplicate.

SAROVICH: God, look at that. Did you make that coat?

BLAKEMAN: Yes.

SAROVICH: She did. That is priceless.

BLAKEMAN: I did not make this one. Here he is again, with the arms!

Here we are here being sworn in, signing our paperwork. Duplicates of this. The TV show.

SCOTT: She says, “You’re delightful.”

BLAKEMAN: This boy’s name is Cliff Ahoye, he was Senator [Hiram] Fong’s [R-HI] page from Hawaii. He was a long ways from home. I don’t remember how to spell his name. He was a nice guy. This must be a going away party. I think a going away because I’m wearing a turtleneck, which would have been winter. Here is the State of the Union.

SCOTT: That’s funny, what’s the story there?

BLAKEMAN: I’m probably saying something like, “Please don’t send me on a trip.” Most of these staff people, I don’t remember their names.

I’m sorry his handwriting is hard to read.

SAROVICH: Read that! Read that out loud!

BLAKEMAN: “Let’s not let my wife Lorraine see this. She might not understand it to be a goodbye-for-now kiss. We’ll miss you.”

SCOTT: That is an awkward photo.

BLAKEMAN: The Rose Garden. [Looking at photos.]

SCOTT: Did you experience any kind of harassment while you were here? How were you treated by the other boy pages and by the members and staff?

BLAKEMAN: I would have to say none that I was aware of. No. I don’t think I was ever hit on. The boys were just as nice as could be. We were equally eligible for practical jokes. The boys were fine. I think they sort of liked it. I think the tenor of the school changed, even as few of us as there were. I was certainly aware that the culture of what was basically a boys’ school was quite different from what I was accustomed to. I think the boys are more blunt and frankly spoken than girls tend to be. I don’t think that’s a school thing, I think that’s a boy/girl thing. They seemed to enjoy having us around. They would arrange dances with girls’ schools and we girls went. I don’t know if the girls at the school were offended, but we felt entitled to go.

SCOTT: These were local schools then?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, but I don't remember the names of any of them. I know I went to one.

SCOTT: You know that the House has closed its page program. If you heard rumors that the Senate was considering a similar action, what would you say in defense of the program? Or would you defend the program?

BLAKEMAN: Certainly. It is not an exaggeration—and you've heard this word many times before—to say that it was a transformative experience. I don't have statistics, but it is commonly known, I think, that a high percentage of pages go on to some sort of public service, not necessarily becoming senators, although it has happened, but a disproportionate representation on school boards, mayors, village boards, political organizations. I think that you are cultivating a special group of young people who have had a special experience. I think the pages perform a useful function. For that reason it would be tragic to have it disbanded.

We did enjoy our relationships with members. I know now that some of the senators make a point of being social with the pages. Al Franken [D-MN] will throw pizza parties for the Senate pages and attend graduation—it's not really graduation but their commencement thing. Harry Reid [D-NV] has stated explicitly that the Senate program has nothing to worry about. They seem to be endorsing it. I think having young people around makes the gravitas of what the senators are doing all the more apparent.

I interviewed a couple of pages who just graduated last spring. No, the House page had been graduated a couple years before. I would say they are just as idealistic as we were 40 years ago. They look up to the senators. "We hold these men and women in high esteem." It's making an impact. The problems with the House program are tragic. The split of the House and the Senate programs, I think, is very unfortunate. Naïve. I think that they could have solved their problems. I'm particularly disappointed because this was such a large part of my experience, that the school is split. Being able to go to school with the House pages, some of whom were from our state, some of whom weren't, was a big part of the experience, a big part. Just the sheer volume of young people in the same place, you could have a student counsel that meant something, you could have a newspaper, a yearbook that meant something. Also, the House pages were juniors and seniors and the Senate pages could be as young as freshman. I didn't have much truck with a 14 year old boy. Paulette and I, being seniors, really did gravitate toward the older House pages. It was a big part of the social experience.

SCOTT: So you all did things together?

BLAKEMAN: Yes, yes. She had the advantage of living at home on one hand, but the disadvantage of not living on the Hill. She had to be driven in at an ungodly hour by her dad. She would often be dismissed early. It was after work and he was up in the gallery so they would send Paulette home. She missed some of that. She missed the Sunday brunches and a couple times she probably came in from Alexandria to just participate in a Saturday afternoon thing. Not being here, she didn't have quite the same experience.

SCOTT: Any final thoughts that you'd like to leave us with about your experience, maybe how it prepared you for your career later on? Or the things you learned here that helped you, either as a citizen, or a professional?

SAROVICH: Can I answer that? Do you mind? I was one of the readers of this *Seventeen* magazine, also from Illinois. I read this article and I said, "This is amazing. I would love to do this." I didn't send you a letter because by the time it was in the article, I don't know which one it was, I was a senior in high school (we're the same age). I also went to the University of Illinois. I also pledged the same sorority. We're from different parts of the state. It's not that big of a state, but we're from different parts. When we all show up that night to say these are my new sorority sisters, I recognize her from *Seventeen* magazine. She says her name. I said, "You were the first girl page in the U.S. Senate."

SCOTT: It had an impact on you?

SAROVICH: It had a big impact on me, yes.

BLAKEMAN: As far as applying legislative strategies to subsequent public relations issues, I would have to say, not too much overlap. Certainly [it provided me with] a keen consciousness of political activity, probably much more even today than at the time. I didn't aspire to political office, although if I had pursued that arena it would have been more of the power behind the throne concept, the press secretary, the administrative aide, although my background is not in poli sci or public policy. When at one point I was asked if I would run for school board that was an easy thing to say yes for. I enjoyed that experience immensely. Later, in working with daycare boards, for instance, and doing community outreach, maybe some of the ideas percolated as far as say, picking a committee to judge a teacher's competition. Knowing that we had to reach out, we need the park district guy, we need the minister, we need—so that kind of consciousness.

SCOTT: Do you have children?

BLAKEMAN: Two boys. They don't know anything about this. It doesn't come up.

SCOTT: Are you still a political person in the sense of, do you follow politics?

BLAKEMAN: Very much so, very much so. I vote. I'm not an activist, but certainly follow.

SCOTT: Maybe you can give them a copy of this oral history and they can read about what you did.

BLAKEMAN: Which raises the question: what's going to happen to this?

SCOTT: We're going to type it up and we'll present it to you and you can read it, edit it. At some point we'd like to include it in a collection of the first girl pages.

BLAKEMAN: Will that be published?

SCOTT: It will. If you give us your permission, we'd like to put it online. We have an online collection. We'd eventually like to bind it in a volume that looks a little bit like this.

BLAKEMAN: We'll want to put something on the Capitol Page website, with a link to this. We now have a partnership with the Historical Society. Well, you do, too. Would you be providing this as content to the Historical Society?

SCOTT: If they wanted it. I can talk to you about that after.

BLAKEMAN: Okay. I think we are done. Oh! I did want to say. You were talking about the value of the program. I'll tell you an anecdote. I didn't hear it first hand, so I'm paraphrasing. One of the pages said to another page. "I was a page. I went to MIT. I worked for NASA. You know the ring I wear? My page ring." When I tell that story to other pages, they have exactly your expression. It resonates. It was a big deal. The boys, the 65th boy from West Virginia who didn't have a single sentence written about him, it was just that big of a deal. A lot of us are still active in government. There are a lot of lobbyists. A lot of lawyers working in different public areas, employment law, one of the

board members is a senior planner for Metro. You don't get any more public policy than public transportation. A lot of professions that are related to our experience.

SCOTT: You have this front row seat to see how the process works and I think that can translate to so many things later on in life. Things that you can do at the community level, being on the daycare board, or something, but also in a larger sense at the state level, at the national level, being members of organizations because you have a knowledge that a lot of other people just don't have. Right?

It's not a textbook type of thing, it's an experience.

BLAKEMAN: Yes, very much so.

SCOTT: I really, really appreciate you joining us today. You have come a long way.

BLAKEMAN: It's kind of self-indulgent, but kind of fun!

SCOTT: Typically, I would start the interview by asking you to introduce yourselves. Maybe you could just do that now.

It's October 17, 2013, and I'm joined here by:

BLAKEMAN: Ellen McConnell Blakeman, Senate page for Senator Charles Percy.

SAROVICH: I'm Sheila Sarovich, resident of Illinois and a friend of Ellen Blakeman's.

SCOTT: Perfect, thank you so much. Thank you.

[End of Interview]

[*Pictures on the following page, clockwise from top left:* Ellen McConnell, one of the Senate's first female pages; McConnell and Paulette Desell with their sponsors, Charles Percy (R-IL) and Jacob Javits (R-NY) (*to the left*), and Senate Sergeant at Arms Robert Dunphy (*to the right*); McConnell and Desell are sworn into office with sponsoring senators Percy and Javits; Senator Percy shakes McConnell's hand; McConnell serves Senator Percy coffee.]



PAULETTE DESELL-LUND
Senator Jacob Javits' First Female Page, 1971-72
April 15, 2014

KATE SCOTT: Today is April 15, 2014, and I am here interviewing Paulette Desell, who was the first girl page appointed to the U.S. Senate, appointed by Senator Jacob Javits of New York. So Paulette, thank you for joining us. I know you've come a long way from Vermont and I would like to start—when did you first hear about the page program and what prompted you to decide to apply?

PAULETTE DESELL-LUND: I heard about it on the nightly news in early November of 1970. I had spoken about it at dinner with my parents and they encouraged me to write a letter to the senator, which I did do through a few drafts. About a month later, not quite, but close to that, we were asked to come to interview with Frank Cummings, Senator Javits' administrative assistant. Then he took us [my parents and me] to the Senate reception room where I met Senator Javits for the first time. We spoke with him for a very short amount of time. He did let me know that there would probably be a lot of media attention involved and asked if I thought I could handle that. I responded that I thought I could, not really knowing. It was very much by chance rather than by design. I had seen pages on the Senate floor in visiting the gallery earlier, previously. That was how I became interested in the page program, because up until that point it wasn't really an option [for a girl].

SCOTT: Right. There are a couple of interesting things about your case as well, which is that, one, you are local to the area rather than being someone from [back in New York]. Help us make that connection. Why would Senator Javits have considered someone living nearby as opposed to someone up in New York?

DESELL-LUND: It was by design for Senator Javits to have someone whose family either lived in the area or who had extended family living in the Washington, D.C., area who would be able to be responsible for a 16-17 year old girl working in Washington, D.C.

SCOTT: You were here because your parents worked here—that's why you were living nearby?

DESELL-LUND: Yes, that's correct. We lived in Alexandria.

SCOTT: Tell me about that letter that you wrote because you have a great exchange with your father over it. [laughs]

DESELL-LUND: When I said I was interested, my father said, “Well write a letter.” I went down the hall to my room and wrote a letter on a little steno pad. I brought it out and showed it to my father who was continuing to watch the nightly news. He looked at it and responded, “Hmm, it's not good enough, try again.” I went back and I tried again. I brought it out again, he looked again, and acknowledged that it was somewhat better, but it still wasn't good enough. I needed to try again. My third try was satisfactory to him, so that was the letter I typed up. My parents helped me to get the final copy typed to send to the senator's office because my typing was not excellent. Those were the days long before people had electric typewriters at home, unbelievably.

SCOTT: Tell me about your first meeting with Senator Javits. What do you recall about him as a person?

DESELL-LUND: I remember he was very alert. It was clear that he was very busy, he had been called off the Senate floor and I remember that he had time for us and wanted to spend that time with us, but that this [page appointment] was a part of—this was a small part of—very large work that the senator did. He was generous with his time with us, but he certainly had his mind on other things also. This was, thank goodness, not the only thing he was thinking about.

SCOTT: Senator Javits is a pioneer on this issue. He is determined that this will happen, that female pages will become the norm in the U.S. Senate. It's 1970 and what sense do you have after meeting with his staff and meeting with him about how soon you may become a Senate page?

DESELL-LUND: We were informed that there were some problems with the office of the sergeant at arms and the Senate Rules Committee; the office of the sergeant of arms was not comfortable moving forward [to accept appointment of a girl page]. We were informed of that, but we were also assured that this would happen, and the expectation was that by the time the 92nd Congress convened after the New Year, that the difficulties, the hurdles, would have been cleared.

SCOTT: And this is in December. Just a month will pass probably and everything will be fine. When you hear about the offer of your appointment, what were you feeling?

DESELL-LUND: Oh, I was delighted! I was just thrilled; it was so exciting to think that I had the opportunity to work in the United States Senate. I wasn't a real seeker

of attention, but I could make it through the media. I was excited about doing the job. I was excited about being in the United States Senate to do the job.

SCOTT: When you learn of your appointment—and then we can talk a little bit about the next few months—things are delayed. But do you ever receive any advice from Senator Javits' staff about how to handle the inevitable media attention? Was there ever any chance to sort of help you figure it out? I mean you're 16, who knows what the attention will be like.

DESELL-LUND: I believe that those discussions probably occurred with my father and he passed information onto me. They were very supportive; Frank Cummings, Paul Leventhal, Paula Schmit were all staff members that I remember interacting with around press conferences and they were encouraging. I think they just really tried to help me stay calm. My father was the one who would just suggest to me maybe the evening before or before we left home in the morning if there was a press conference, he would raise some questions that I probably ought to think about because they might be asked. Sometimes they were and sometimes they weren't, but simply the questions were the catalyst that enabled me to reflect and feel a little more comfortable.

SCOTT: Senator Javits anticipated that this would be quickly resolved and in fact it wasn't. The process dragged on for five or six months into mid-1971. Tell me a little bit about what you were doing during that five-month waiting period and the communication you had with Senator Javits' office and what you were thinking, what you and your family were thinking might happen?

DESELL-LUND: We were in fairly regular communication with the senator's office, again, usually through my father, but occasionally a letter was sent to me. I'm sure there were times that I was discouraged because it really did drag on. The interaction was usually encouraging and just, "Hang in there, this is going to happen. We didn't think it would take this amount of time, but this is going to happen." There was just this confident resolve that it really wasn't a question. It would be.

SCOTT: And Senator Javits is joined eventually by some other colleagues who also make the point that they will make an effort to appoint female Senate pages.

DESELL-LUND: Yes. Senator [Fred] Harris [D-OK] appointed Julie Price and Senator [Charles] Percy [R-IL] appointed Ellen McConnell [Blakeman] and you know their stories and where they were. I continued to go to high school in suburban Virginia, in Fairfax County. We would keep in touch, the three of us. I would often talk to Julie on the phone and I am sure we would commiserate as teenage girls do, "When this is going

to be finished,” and “How awful are those people that are holding us up?” I would also communicate with Ellen, who was right here in Washington, by phone. Beyond the attendance at a committee meeting in February, no I guess—in March, those things happening, life went on pretty much as usual except that there's this sort of dangling hope that really-everybody is right and this will happen. Because you really don't for sure know. So that's kind of where we lived.

SCOTT: What did you know about the issues on the Senate side that were slowing down the process? How did you understand, here's some of the hurdles and things? Were those identified to you by the senator's office?

DESELL-LUND: They were. They were identified as time went on, I believe, because they kept throwing up more hurdles. The notion of—well the work is too heavy or too hard. What bathrooms would girl pages use? Well they can't go in the Marble Room—how appropriate is it that they go into the cloakroom? The concerns about language that the senator's might use and what would we wear. Many things that seemed from my perspective as a youngster, foolish, non-issues.

I certainly do believe that they [the issues raised] were important enough to these men to take their time and even bother to try and block it. It was important enough to them! I believe that some of it was motivated by [the idea], “Well these are young girls, we want them safe.” That's wonderful, but they also should have wanted young boys safe. There was a level of protection there that didn't only apply to girl pages. I remember debate on the Senate floor about women and the draft. The same concern was raised there, clearly at a more intense level for, again, the safety of women in that case, in war.

SCOTT: Did you hear from other pages, young boy pages, who were already serving in the Senate?

DESELL-LUND: I did. Well, not anyone that was serving right in the Senate. Boys that had served in the Senate and they were encouraging and they were positive. That kind of buoyed up my spirits. A total unknown to us was, “How will these boys accept us?” To hear from someone that, “You can do the work” and, “You will enjoy it. It's a great place to be.” It seemed to signal that there would be acceptance and that was certainly positive because when you're 16 years old, that is much more important to you than the weighty issues that old men care about.

SCOTT: [Laughs] That's great, that is so true. Tell me a little bit about what you recall of that Senate hearing where you were asked to testify before this ad-hoc committee that was determining whether or not females could be appointed as pages.

DESELL-LUND: I remember very little. I only know what I was able to go back and read and I did that a week ago—I don't remember that either. [laughs]

SCOTT: Do you remember being nervous?

DESELL-LUND: Oh yes, yes. At that point in time, I had been through enough media experiences that I knew I could survive those, but this was different. These were the people who were going to make the decision. These were the people who were in the way of the job. That was different, that [concern], I think, was there for the three of us, a sense of, if it doesn't go our way, we don't get to do this. We don't get to be pages. That probably made it a much more tense interaction.

SCOTT: Do you recall having any coaching from the senator's office about preparing for your statement?

DESELL-LUND: I believe there probably was, but I don't recall.

SCOTT: Something happened at that Senate hearing because it wasn't long after that the Senate—that Jacob Javits submits his resolution allowing for the appointment of girl pages, but also girls in other areas, elevator operators and other things, which is interesting. And it passes. The Senate finally approves it, I think this was in May, we just looked at this, I have forgotten already. Tell me about the moment when you finally found out that it was going to happen.

DESELL-LUND: I was in school; it was the end of the school day when I found out. I simply received a slip to come to the office; my mother was there to pick me up. Having received that, I had no idea why she was there to pick me up. We didn't have an exact date [telling us], “Well this is when it's going to be voted on.” I went to the office and my mother and I left. She told me, “Okay, tomorrow you're going to be sworn in and you need something to wear. We need to get some fabric, and your sister is coming home and you two need to do some work.”

SCOTT: Where was your sister? She was in college?

DESELL-LUND: My sister, Linda, was in college at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg. She came home and together we sewed the pants suit [I wore], which in retrospect, it occurred to me recently, “Why did we wait until now?” I don't know, but apparently we did [both laugh]. Definitely not good preparation, but it was ready to go the next morning. It was probably a good way to soothe nerves the day before.

SCOTT: Tell me about that next day being sworn in. What was that like?

DESELL-LUND: Well, we went to Senator Javits' office. That was where we were sworn in—that's where Ellen and I were sworn in, sometime mid-morning I believe. It was the senator's private office and it was just packed with press. Then they packed in my family and Ellen's family. There was a little jostling near the microphones as they were trying to get us close enough together so that everyone was satisfied that they got the coverage they wanted for their mic and that they got all of us in the pictures. Senator Javits spoke a little, for a moment. Senator Percy spoke, and we were sworn in. Then I believe the press asked Ellen and me a couple of questions and we needed to sign some paperwork and we were pages!

SCOTT: And that was it. You were off. Tell me about working as a page and what types of things you were doing daily.

DESELL-LUND: On a daily basis, we would generally come over from school very early. People [other pages] have probably shared with you that at that point in time, Senator Robert Byrd [D-WV] was in charge of when the Senate went in session and he was not one for dawdling. The Senate was starting its work day at nine o'clock in the morning, which meant we needed to be at work at eight o'clock in the morning.

We would, of course, need to put any amendments, resolutions, and hearing reports that were going to be coming up on senators' desks for the day. The previous day's *Congressional Record* needed to be put into a wonderful thick folio, which I certainly hope they don't do anymore. Depending on how big a *Congressional Record* was for a day—it could range from being probably 3/8 of an inch thick to three quarters of an inch thick on a big day—those *Records* might need to be what we called stripped every seven to ten working days, which meant we would have to take all the *Records* out of these large binders, leave only the previous day's [*Congressional Record*] and get rid of the backlog of *Records*. Some would be put in the Senate records room downstairs. I think it was three to five copies, I don't recall exactly, which we saved and took to the records room. That's a fun story, when we would take records down to the records room, each page would sign—there was a post there and pages through the ages had signed that, Bobby Baker's signature was there and I signed it, and Ellen signed it, all of us Republicans [signed it] because the Republicans and the Democrats had separate records rooms. So we each signed that, it was a tradition.

SCOTT: So you're saying there is a wall—a pole in the wall?

DESELL-LUND: It was like a—the room, the records room—it was in the basement of the Capitol and there was a support—

SCOTT: A pillar.

DESELL-LUND: A pillar, thank you! A support pillar that people would sign there or on the wall nearby as they were pages. The key to the records room was always getting lost as I recall—you can just picture this. You've got ten teenagers. How did the key ever exist? When it was found—when it existed and was somewhere that was known, it was a normal key with a ring attached to it through a block of wood that was probably two and a half inches by six inches long. So you would think that it couldn't be lost, but it was frequently lost. I don't know if this is the kind of thing you want to hear, but where I learned how to break into some place was learning to break into the Republican Senate records room. We never had the key, hardly. It would frequently be missing. You take a little ID and you put it there in between the door and the jam. You never learned this?

SCOTT: No. [both laugh]

DESELL-LUND: You put it between the door and the jam. You could kind of wiggle it and you could get the door to pop right open.

SCOTT: Wow. I assume that the other pages were teaching you how to do this?

DESELL-LUND: You know Michael Johnson? Michael Johnson taught me to do that! [laughs]

SCOTT: That's great [laughs]. Michael Johnson went on to have a long career here in the Senate.

DESELL-LUND: I know!

SCOTT: Let's go back to these first days and your reception among the boys, the boy pages, but also among the senators. I mean it must have been clear to you who voiced some of the strongest objections to having—or was it clear to you? Which senators were most opposed to having girl pages? And then how did that make you feel when you had deliver things to them or had to run errands or things like that. Were you thinking about it much?

DESELL-LUND: I don't think I overly focused on it really. The other pages were very accepting and we formed wonderful friendships. Michael Johnson knew the

hallways and tunnels of Capitol Hill better than anyone else at 14. He was probably the one that taught me most of what I know as far as getting around the Capitol and the buildings. We would be paired with them [other pages] to go on runs with the tickets and learn how to get the initials of office staff, their signatures, when we had delivered something or we had taken something to move it over to the Senate and to go on to the other side of the Hill. Relationships with boy pages were fine. Some of them were about my age, some of them were a couple years younger than me. That's a big deal at 16, 17. Joe Doss, you know Joe. Joe was incorrigible, but he was just being a 14-year-old kid. David Federle, these were all people that I worked with and they were very kind, they were fun, they would include us. That was fun, that was no problem.

Senators, I believe yes, there were senators who were more and less happy with our presence, [with] Julie's and my presence, and Ellen's just very shortly afterward. To their credit, they were no more dismissive of us than they would be to boys, I didn't feel. Some of them could be pretty darn dismissive. They were not all great personalities, but many of them were very, very nice, very kind. Some senators actually came up to me as I sat on the steps and shook my hand and welcomed me, which was very, very thoughtful. I have wracked my brain. I don't know if you have one of those little books of congressional members from the 92nd Congress. If I had one to look at, I might be able to tell you who was—there was a Democratic senator who came up to me about a month after I had been there and he introduced himself and he said, "I want to welcome you. I was not really sure that girls should be pages, but you have always conducted yourself as a young lady and I'm very happy that you are here." That was very thoughtful of him and he was a southern Democratic senator. He was probably not one of the ones that was at all comfortable—he might have voted yes, but he probably wasn't at all comfortable with having girl pages. That was nice. Does that answer your question?

SCOTT: Yes that was great. Who were your favorites? Who were your favorite senators over time?

DESELL-LUND: Well certainly I had favorite senators—I had and continue to have a very deep respect for Senator Javits. It was clear that he was so dedicated to his work. I have always felt he was a great politician in the very best sense of the word, politician. In that I mean that he had great integrity and he worked very hard for important issues like civil rights. I remember a speech he gave about the Lockheed loan guarantee and I remember him saying that the reality is that we are wondering if we should have this loan guarantee, but if something is good for General Motors it's probably good for the United States. He was saying that supporting business supported the people of our nation. He was a very pragmatic man and I think in that combination of pragmatism and working for the rights of others and making life better for people in our

nation—those are the reasons I respected him so much. That's where my appointment and the appointments of the first black page and first Puerto Rican page, that was the roots of that. He cared about what was right and just. He was smart enough to do things that brought positive attention to him and his work in a way that people would react well to it. He was a very serious hard working, brilliant man.

My connection, favorite really on the Senate floor was George Aiken [R-VT]. I loved George Aiken. He had these two ties that he wore. One was red and one was blue and they had elephants on them and that's it. He had a red tie and a blue tie with elephants on them and it would be a red day or a blue day. He would come through those doors from the Senate lobby and he'd just be kind of humming to himself and he'd stop and say hello. He was just the most humble man. You probably know this, his greatest honor in his entire working career was to be governor of the state of Vermont. If people knew him they would address him as governor and not as senator. That was what he valued to a greater degree, but there was no show about Senator Aiken. People might look at him and think, "Oh, well, he's not really aware of what's going on." But he was, he took it all in. He just didn't feel the need to get up and flap his mouth about it. I do recall, he spoke three times during the 13 months that I was a page and I wrote this down last night because I can't guarantee that my memory is good enough to remember all three of them without [it] being difficult right now. He spoke regarding Vietnam and getting out of Vietnam and I think people were very aware of—he was the one who said, "We just need to declare victory and get out. That's it." That was about the length of his speech, it was about two sentences long.

SCOTT: Short and to the point.

DESELL-LUND: That was it. He didn't waste people's time.

There was a discussion on the Senate floor one day and it was a Democrat who was saying, regarding elections, and I believe he was talking about the election of [President Nguyễn Văn] Thiệu in South Vietnam, that Thiệu had run unopposed and that could not be a democratic election, if he ran unopposed. George Aiken took exception to that. [He] stood up and said that the last one or two times that he had run for the United States Senate, he had run unopposed and he was quite certain that it was a democratic election. This was a long speech because then he went on to say that the cost of his last reelection campaign was somewhere around \$30 and that was what he had spent on his reelection campaign. This was just a genuine man that was there; he was doing what he needed to for the leadership of our country. He really wasn't about himself. He was just wonderful.

And then the third time, and I loved this one because this was a connection to the other senator who I just admired so much and that was Mike Mansfield [D-MT]. To me, Mike Mansfield is the epitome of a statesman. Oh, he was just so good at what he did and for all these men that I've mentioned, there was just such genuine integrity to them. The last time he [George Aiken] spoke to the Senate that I recall, he told the Senate that they had a job to do; it was time to listen to Senator Mansfield and get the job done. I think this might have been when they needed to leave for Christmas and people were not getting things done. He just stood up and he told the Senate, "You're here for a reason and you've got a job to do, and you need to listen to the Majority Leader and you need to do your job gentlemen." And that was it. It was like, "Yes! We would like to go home too." [laughs]

I loved Senator Aiken. How has that influenced my life? Well I live in Vermont.

SCOTT: That's very interesting. But you didn't have any prior connections to Vermont did you?

DESELL-LUND: I had visited Vermont once as a child. Truly I wound up where I was supposed to be. I'd only been there once and had fallen in love with it. I went there after college. Senator Aiken was a favorite of mine, and I want to say a little more about Senator Mansfield.

I don't know if it was this question but one of the questions you asked about was what were some of my most vivid memories as a page? Listening to Mike Mansfield talk about the trip he and Hugh Scott [R-PA] had made to China just mesmerized me. There were often times when I did not mind leaving the Senate floor. I liked to [go on] runs, I enjoyed that, but when he was giving that speech I was planted at the front of those steps and I wasn't giving up my spot. It was just fascinating, just so fascinating. That was a point in my life where I—I just so much wanted to travel. That was so important to me that the world was becoming so much smaller a place than it had been. There were barriers that were breaking down that been in place my entire life. That was pretty fascinating. I certainly remembered that speech as being something that I would not leave the floor for. Senator Mansfield was a favorite of mine.

The other senator who I really recall with affection was Clifford Case [R-NJ]. His desk was right in front of the steps. He was in the front row. He would come in and he would greet us and sometimes chat. I recall one time he came in and said, "My hands are cold, I lost my mittens. I don't know where they are, have you seen my mittens?" And he's looking around and we answered, "No Senator." Atlee Valentine and I were sitting there and were a part of this interaction with him and we kind of joked, we should get

him some him mittens. Over the weekend I went and got him little kids mittens at the store and when he came in the next Monday they were on his desk. These little children's mittens and he came in and he looked at them and looked at us and said, "Did you do this?" Yes, we did. He laughed. He routinely acknowledged us.

One of the things that was sometimes frustrating as a page was that there were probably at least half of the senators who did not really acknowledge us as people. We were people to respond to the snap and take care of what they needed. That's fine, that was the job. We were the people to open the door for them, get them for a telephone call. Some senators had the graciousness to say thank you and others did not. You sort of knew who those people were. I believe it was Senator [John] Stennis [D-MS]—in the morning before the Senate would open we [pages] talked while putting that day's paperwork on each desk. Then starting 15 minutes before the Senate would be in session, we would "man the doors" and we would open the doors, because apparently these men were not strong enough to open their own doors. We would open the doors for them. Like I say, some of them would acknowledge you and others would not. Again, getting on toward Christmas that first year, I believe Senator Stennis was—I don't know if it was [chairman of] Appropriation or Armed Services, but we were talking about money for Armed Services and that was one of the things that was not getting done. So we decided, when we opened the door for Senator Stennis we were going to say "Merry Christmas Senator Stennis" to him and we did and he did not acknowledge us then, either [both laugh].

SCOTT: So he was one of those who typically didn't acknowledge?

DESELL-LUND: He was one who typically did not acknowledge us. And so was Ted Kennedy [D-MA]. In a typical day we would do that [open the doors], the Senate sessions would start. There would be runs to the Dirksen and Russell Senate Buildings, which were just called the old and new buildings at that point in time. Every afternoon there would be runs, a run at least, to the House side of the hill. That was something that I pretty routinely did. I liked doing that. One thing that I'm good at is visual spatial ability, I would get a half dozen runs and I would be like, "Oh what's the most efficient way that I can do this?" And I could plan that in my head, which I was generally very successful with, except for the Rayburn Building, which is just a labyrinth. That building makes no sense at all.

SCOTT: The hallways, it is so hard to figure out.

DESELL-LUND: You could be on the fifth floor in room 539 and say, "I need to go to 429, I'll go down this staircase." You go down the staircase and you were nowhere

near the same room numbers. [Scott laughs] It never made sense to me, but I'd still go there. I would do runs pretty routinely. I'd stop off and visit people sometimes, Michael J. [Johnson] introduced me to a whole lot of people in the United States Capitol and sometimes you'd stop and chat for a couple of minutes. I'd go out on the House steps and see if any House pages were outside. Frequently, I'd always seem to go out there when Chris Shay was having a smoke. He was a house page. He was a friend of ours.

I enjoyed the runs and I enjoyed going into the offices. I enjoyed figuring out how to go from here to there. One of the NOT best runs I ever had was when I needed to go to Lowell Weicker's [R-CT] office to pick up something and bring it back to the Senate floor. They had not told the cloakroom what it was so I was sent. I had to pick up a spittoon for Senator Weicker and bring it back to the Senate floor. It was a nice brass spittoon if someone was really into—

SCOTT: And it was clean?

DESELL-LUND: Yes, I think it was at that point, thank God. When I walked into the cloakroom with it, Howard Green, he was the head cloakroom page at the time, he shrieked, “Oh God! I can't believe they had you carry that.”

SCOTT: Were there tasks that were sort of divided by gender?

DESELL-LUND: I think it was more preference. There were people like, for example, I liked to do House runs and I didn't cause a whole lot of trouble [for cloakroom staff] so I got my way. I liked to do “all senators” where you needed to go to each office, I enjoyed those. You got all of them for the old building or the new building. Usually we'd race and we'd see who could get back first.

[Interruption]

SCOTT: Okay, you were just saying some of the things you liked.

DESELL-LUND: Yes, the boys usually got to handle the flatbed, you know the flatbed cart that would take the records downstairs. That was typically a job that was assigned to them. Of course we couldn't go into the Marble Room so if someone was in the Marble Room, then the boys had to go. If someone needed a speaking podium, one of those podiums for the desk, one of the boys had to go. [Those were also in the Marble Room.] We would also, in the days of the ticker, we would tear off the ticker [which printed out the Associate Press news], that was a routine sort of job. There were, as I mentioned, there was a peer who oversaw the pages on the floor and that job was called a

floor boy. Ellen was a floor boy and so I think that barrier was very quickly cleared. I guess those are the typical things that I remember being a part of our days.

I have this wonderful story. It was summertime. Dan Schwick, who was a Democratic page, and I were on an elevator. We got on having gotten off the subway in the Capitol. Of course, we were allowed on first and we were in the very back of the elevator. They [the elevator operators] piled in far more people than you think could ever fit, so it's very, very shoulder to shoulder. When we got to the second floor, of course we needed to get out, but all these tourists [packed in front of us] were going to the galleries. Dan had this moment of not recalling the words he needed and instead he blurted, "Look out!" [both laugh] So people in front of us just parted and we walked off. I looked at him and said, "Look out?" We just doubled over laughing. Dan said, "I forgot the words 'excuse me!'" It was great; I still remember and can still chuckle when I think about it.

That's pretty much it for a day, as far as what I recall we did on a typical day.

SCOTT: There were a lot of political and policy issues that were very much alive at the time. You already mentioned Vietnam. Were you following any of those things?

DESELL-LUND: I did follow some of them, but really—others, I really couldn't wrap my head around. They were just too big for me as a kid, and they might be too big for me now. Really, what I did learn and developed a respect for through the debate that I heard and the issues I was aware of is that no problems are simple, all problems are multifaceted. You can learn something from almost every perspective, and that there's value in debate and in listening to one another. Compromise is paramount because the obligation is to move to a better place, not a singular place of one person's point of view or another, but to move in a direction that is better for all. So that certainly was an overarching lesson that I learned in listening to debate, while at the same time knowing, "Wow, I really don't get all the details of this." So I guess that was my take away.

SCOTT: That's a great lesson.

DESELL-LUND: It was a great lesson, it really was. And it's certainly very useful in any walk of life.

SCOTT: Were your parents political?

DESELL-LUND: No, no. Not at all. If they had any political leanings, however, they were Democratic.

SCOTT: Oh, okay. I was going to ask if you knew if they had supported Javits when they lived in New York?

DESELL-LUND: Wow, I have no idea, but probably most likely given their view points and his liberalism, most probably. But I don't know. We never had a discussion about that.

SCOTT: What were some of your least favorite tasks as a Senate page? Assignments?

DESELL-LUND: Wow, I can't think of anything that I really disliked doing. I never thought of that before. That's real positive, isn't it?

SCOTT: [Laughs] It is positive. What about school? What was your school experience like? I know that those were very short hours and you had very short periods of study for English and math and other things. What did you think of that experience? How would you evaluate it?

DESELL-LUND: I recall that the 12th grade literature book I had was printed the year I was born, so I didn't have a lot of respect for the D.C. school system at the outset. I believe that the Capitol Page School had some very good teachers. I don't think I had more than one of those teachers possibly, but to be fair, I only had two teachers. I needed two credits; I needed a government credit and I needed an English credit to graduate from high school.

I also took physics as a senior and Mr. Steely, he was a good teacher and he was funny. I was the only girl in the class. I recall him saying, "I haven't had any girls in this class in the twenty odd years I've been teaching this." He always called me Miss Paulette, and he was always nice to me and wasn't all that nice to the boys. [laughs] Even when I screwed up he was still nice to me. I think he was afraid I would cry or something. Our English teacher, I think, was very overwhelmed by the boys.

From the point of view of a student that had come out of a good suburban high school in Fairfax County, the expectations and the instruction at the Capitol Page School were far below par, except for physics, but Mr. Steely taught at the University of Maryland so that helps you to understand that. From my point of view many years later as an educator, here these men and women were seeing students for sometimes a semester, possibly two semesters, possibly four years. Where did they invest their time and effort? Well, I think that if I could have gone back and seen it with different eyes, they were probably investing most of their effort in the kids that were there for the four,

and the three, and the two years, and they should have been. Really I received very little in the way of education at the Capitol Page School. However, to be fair to my teachers, we had fifteen minute periods so it was all self-study and I believe that those individuals probably recognized that kids that were there for a semester or two semesters were probably, hopefully, getting a good education where they were attending the rest of their high school experience. But for this handful of kids that were there for four years, Capitol Page School was all the education they were going to get, so hopefully they did a better job with them. I just sort of hope.

Some of the teachers were not particularly engaging, I don't think, to the girls. I don't know that it was necessarily girls so much as the fact that we were really there for a short amount of time and they were probably pretty confident that we didn't need them a whole lot, but they did have students who really needed an education and they were the only ones to give it to them. I'm kind of giving them the benefit of the doubt. Maybe that's where they really tried to invest their effort. When I think of, again, working in a situation where students sometimes come and go, to have as many as 30 percent of your student population change every semester, is not a good thing for a teacher because you have no opportunity to get to know these students, to get to know their strengths or their weaknesses.

SCOTT: And to help them develop over time.

DESELL-LUND: Exactly. Yeah, it's tricky.

SCOTT: One thing I always love about the page stories that I hear is the incredible access that you all have to some spaces that a lot of us don't even know about. I'm thinking of hideaway offices and things like that, but also that as a page you get to attend some events, like a joint session of Congress. What were some of your favorite moments?

DESELL-LUND: Some of these I did write down. I got to go up on the dome of the Capitol, to the top of the Capitol dome, outside. That was an incredible experience to walk up those inside steps and then to be outside there and look at the city. It was early on a Saturday morning and it was a foggy day, I remember. That was awesome, just incredible to have that opportunity. That took, at that point in time, a whole lot of finagling for a small group of us to be able to do that. That was not a commonplace thing.

SCOTT: It was a group of pages then?

DESELL-LUND: It was a group of pages, yeah. I think we were taken up by someone in the House, on the House side. I think that was it. That was one of them.

I have a memory of Edward Brooke's [R-MA] speech about planning for the bicentennial. Again I think it was Atlee and I, the Senate was almost deserted. There was the presiding officer there and there were maybe two or three other senators on the floor. Brooke had come down to the front desk right in front of the podium. Senator Mundt's desk. So he spoke from that desk and we were just a few feet away, and there was really no one else in the room. He gave the whole speech to Atlee and I, and it was kind of fun because we were there and we were listening and we were reacting. As people will do, you react and then they continue to pay attention to you. So there was something I recall in his reference to—on the 5th of [July] 1976, he wanted the American people to wake up to more than a hangover. He wanted it to be a celebration, but he wanted it to be a celebration on a grand scale and that really celebrated history as well. I recall that. Let's see.

SCOTT: He was a remarkable man. First African American elected since Reconstruction.

DESELL-LUND: He was one of those senators who acknowledged pages on a routine basis. He was a good man. Let's see.

SCOTT: Did you know the senators who opposed the girl pages coming in?

DESELL-LUND: Did I know who they were?

SCOTT: Yes, did you know who they were?

DESELL-LUND: Well, I mean, other than the things that I had read in news articles, no. To tell you the truth, we knew there were some. You could tell that some people didn't react to us. I really felt that to a great degree, they were also just grumpy old guys who didn't react to the boys very nicely either. There were some that were fairly curt and dismissive. [Hugh] Scott was one of those, [John] Tower [R-TX] was one of those. I'd have to look at something, but there were a number of them. People who acknowledged us as a group [were] Senator Brooke, Senator Weicker, Senator [Bob] Packwood [R-OR], Senator [Mark] Hatfield [R-OR]. Those people all acknowledged us, but they acknowledged the boys too. I know that unfortunately over time, things have come out that there were inappropriate things with some individuals, but I never experienced anything like that. They were just genuine and acknowledged that we were human beings that were there to help.

SCOTT: You had 13 months here, which is a different experience than many other pages. What were some of the other memories that you have of those really special moments?

DESELL-LUND: Well I remember that—this was the time that Ellen was there and they were voting on the Equal Rights Amendment. And Ellen was emphatic, “I am not leaving this Senate floor!” [laughs] I was like, “Okay Ellen, you got it.” This I also remember very clearly, they were going to have another vote right after the vote on the Equal Rights Amendment and so they needed someone to stand in the hall and tell the senators not to go away. That was one of my assignments. So there were two of us, and I don't remember who the other person was, but as the senators were [leaving]—most often when they left the chamber, if they were going back to their offices they came out on the Republican side of the Senate and they'd head for the elevators. We were stationed there to catch them after they had gotten past the plain clothes policeman or guards but before they got out to the hallway to tell them, “Please do not go too far senator, there's another vote coming.”

SCOTT: Did you have an opinion about the ERA?

DESELL-LUND: Well, I guess my opinion, it was tempered by—well we didn't have an equal rights amendment and we [girl pages] got here. I don't know if we need it. I think that there have been times in my life when I listen to both sides and end up thinking, hmm, so I don't know if I have strong opinion now. I believe that was sort of my approach to it, which is probably different than it would be now. At 16, 17, that was what I was thinking.

SCOTT: Were you also applying to colleges then?

DESELL-LUND: I did. Yes, as a senior. The influence that the page experience had on me being in a small school as opposed to a very large high school was significant. I was in a class of over 500 at Fort Hunt High School. I was in a class of 19 at the Capitol Page School. I liked a smaller school better, so when I applied to colleges I applied to the University of Massachusetts and Nazareth College, and a couple of colleges in the state of Virginia. Nazareth College is in New York State in Rochester and I was accepted by Nazareth. It was a women's college and I had decided that I would study to become a speech pathologist. That was what I wanted to major in. I went to Nazareth College and I mean, I could have studied that at the University of Massachusetts, but having been at both a large school and small school, I chose Nazareth. Never regretted that. I received a good education.

SCOTT: I noticed on your letter to Senator Javits that you mentioned you wanted to be a teacher? And did something about the Senate experience change your desire to teach?

DESELL-LUND: No, it was my mother. [laughs]

SCOTT: Who was a teacher.

DESELL-LUND: Who was a teacher. And her advice to me was, don't teach in the classroom. If you want to go into education, specialize in something. She made arrangements for me to visit Gallaudet [University] and to do some observation there one day, and speak to some people there. I did decide to major in speech pathology and I am still a speech pathologist. It was kind of nice to go back to New York State. At the time we moved to D.C. when I was 10 or 11, I had never felt like this was home. New York State was home to me. This was not home, really. I was fine with returning to New York State.

SCOTT: Well, tell me about how the lessons you learned or the experience here as a Senate page, how it may have shaped your life after.

DESELL-LUND: This is what I thought about last night and I might need to look at my notes. I think that the major influence on my life was just the self-knowledge that I can do this. And it really doesn't matter, if I wind up in a situation, [I know] I can do this, regardless of what it is. If I have to do it, if I need to do it, because I'm told that it has to be done, I will do it. I believe very strongly in self-knowledge. That's a very empowering thing for all of us. I believe that was the greatest takeaway influence in my life.

As we just talked about, my mother was a teacher and it was through her guidance that I pursued becoming a speech language pathologist. Certainly, what was important to me in my life came from my family. The Senate, compared to my life before and after, was a flash in the pan. It opened my eyes to a wider world, but in some ways it was like the ultimate 3-D experience, but it wasn't the experience that I was seeking in the world, either. It didn't awaken in me any plans for grand solutions or certainly being a person who pursued any place that's powerful in any way. If anything, my takeaway regarding power was how dangerous it is and how alluring it is and that it can be abused by people. It didn't influence me in that manner; it was really the, "Okay I can do this." Simply that.

SCOTT: What do you think the page program offers generally to young people in high school years? If the Senate ever considered doing away with its page program as the

House has done, what would you want to say to Senate leaders who were considering that?

DESELL-LUND: I believe there is great value in young people being able to see firsthand democracy in action, and the Senate needs to be careful that that's what they're doing. Those young people have an understanding of our government system, that's a part of them. It's not something that they've learned in a book. You really understand it very intrinsically [as a page], it's woven into you. I believe that there's value in that. I believe that for some people, it was a real spring board to pursuing great dreams that have really changed lives or created opportunities for many people. And it would be a terrible thing [for young people] to lose that opportunity. I certainly don't think it would work to have college aged students. That would just be ridiculous, because they wouldn't be focused. They'd be focused on themselves, [their careers], they wouldn't be focused on what was there before them.

SCOTT: You've been involved with some of the page reunions. You've come back for a few page reunions.

DESELL-LUND: One.

SCOTT: What prompted you to do that?

DESELL-LUND: It was probably Atlee Valentine saying, "Paulette, I'll go if you go."

SCOTT: You're still in contact with a few?

DESELL-LUND: Atlee Valentine I am in contact with, [and] Ellen and Julie more so probably within the last five years, although I never really lost contact with Atlee. I have had e-mail contact with friends that I worked with, peers. When that reunion occurred two years ago, I really worked to find as many people as I could using the Internet and did manage to find a number of people and let them know that there was a strong core of people from the time we were there that were going to be present. It was wonderful to see them.

SCOTT: Is there anything that you'd like to add that we haven't covered?

DESELL-LUND: No, I guess not.

SCOTT: I thank you very much for your time, coming down all the way from Vermont and spending the afternoon with us. Thank you so much.

DESELL-LUND: You're welcome, you're welcome.

[End of Interview]

[Pictures on the following page, clockwise from the top: Paulette Desell (center right) sworn in as one of the Senate's first female pages, with (left to right) Senator Charles Percy (R-IL), fellow page Ellen McConnell, and Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY); Desell with her sponsoring senator, Jacob Javits; Desell with fellow page Julie Price.]



JULIE PRICE
Senator Fred Harris' First Female Page, 1971-72
December 5, 2012

KATE SCOTT: Welcome, Julie. Thank you for coming down here from Pennsylvania to talk with us about your experience as a page in 1971. Maybe you can start off by telling us how you got interested in the Senate page program.

JULIE PRICE: I was sitting in my desk [in civics class] in about 8th grade, give or take a year, middle school, basically, which we called junior high. I must have been bored, I think everyone was heading out to lunch. It was a hot, boring day. I was flipping through my civics book and I saw a picture of these guys in blue suits that looked about my age. I read about them. They were pages. Their ages were the same as my age, in the same range, and they worked in the Senate or maybe in the House, I'm not sure. It just went bing! What a great job! I was interested in politics. It was the '60s. I had my eye on these passionate politicians, like Bobby Kennedy [R-NY], for example. The wave of the '60s movements, I was fascinated by, even though I was in Oklahoma. I thought, I can do that and that's what I want to do. That's how I got interested.

SCOTT: You said you were political. Were your parents political? Did you come from a political family?

PRICE: My family was always political, especially my father. At the University of Oklahoma, I think he met Fred Harris [D-OK] there. I think they were students there together. He introduced me in Bartlesville to different politicians when they came through town. My congressman was Ed Edmondson. By that time I had been doing some work on political campaigns, just knocking on doors and stuffing envelopes and doing what I was told to do, really.

SCOTT: For the congressman?

PRICE: And going to rallies. For the Democratic Party, the local Democratic Party, which my dad was involved in. We were in a very Republican area and so it became a fun rivalry. It wasn't like it is today. We were all friends with each other. We went to school together, the adults worked together. Election time was a fun rivalry. We were in the minority. I would go sometimes with my Dad to rallies and meet candidates. That's how I met Ed Edmondson and Fred Harris. Ed Edmondson was more accessible because he was our congressman. The next rally I went to I approached him and said I knew what I wanted to do, that I wanted to be a page. How do I do that? He said that's a

great idea, but you know you can't do it. Girls aren't allowed. I was stunned. It made no sense to me, of course. I had three sisters and two brothers and we lived on a farm and I knew I could do anything my brothers could do. I was surprised that that would be the reception. I don't know if I thought about it and the next time I saw him I asked him again. After giving it some thought, I'm sure I said something like, "What should I do to change things so that girls can be pages?" As if there was some simple change that could be made. It was so obvious to me that the rule made no sense, I thought that once pointed out, others [in Congress] would see my point; as if it had been a mistake or oversight in the first place. But at some point I said, "Is there anything we can do to change that? What could be done?" Or maybe he said, "Here's what you can do." [cell phone ringing]

That's my son texting. I'm sorry.

SCOTT: That's okay.

PRICE: Let me turn that off.

SCOTT: So maybe the next time you saw him you said, "Is there anything we can do?"

PRICE: I didn't take that as the final word. [I said, "So what do I do now? Is there something that can be done to change the policy/rules?"] He said, "You could write a petition." I was like, "How do you do that? What's a petition?" [both laugh] "And how do you write one?" He told me. I had a good friend who was also political and her dad was an attorney. We came up with this wording and her dad put it in legal form for us. "We the undersigned agree that girls should be—" To this day I wonder where that petition is. We brought it to Capitol Hill.

SCOTT: Maybe it's in some senator's or committee's papers?

PRICE: Maybe.

SCOTT: You brought it to Capitol Hill?

PRICE: In our hands. We delivered it. It had 300-500 signatures. We thought that was a lot of signatures for Bartlesville, Oklahoma. It was our teachers and our parents and our friends, everyone.

SCOTT: Did your parents come out here with you to deliver the petition?

PRICE: I came a couple of times. Once I came with a group called the Young Dems. We came with our leader who was a Democratic, maybe committeewoman, an officeholder, locally. My parents were not on that trip. There was a group of maybe six of us. I do have some pictures of that trip, I can bring them. We came and one of our goals was to go and see—I think we saw Ed Edmondson and maybe Fred Harris on that trip. At some point, I believe they kept it in Washington on that trip, I don't think we went home with it. Xeroxing wasn't so easy in those days. We made a few copies to go around and we probably handed them all in, like homework, you know? We discussed the possibility of girls being pages and they were all very happy to meet with us and talk with us. That was that. We never heard anything. That was in junior high. Then later, when I was a sophomore in high school I didn't really expect anything to come of it. I went off to boarding school. I was antsy, you see. I went off to boarding school in Massachusetts and that's where I was when they called me, when I was a junior.

SCOTT: You went years without hearing anything? And they found you in Massachusetts? They presumably called your parents, I suppose.

PRICE: [Before they found me] my boarding school also took a school trip to Washington. On that trip I also made my rounds to Harris' office and to Edmondson's office to see what was going on with my petition. Again, they met with me. I didn't have my [Oklahoma] friends with me then.

SCOTT: The members?

PRICE: I have pictures of me with Fred Harris from that trip, I'm pretty sure it's Fred Harris. [Actually it is Ed Edmondson] Yes. I was a boarding school kid at that point with braces. We were going over, looking over some papers. It was the same kind of meeting. "It's a good idea, we think it's great that you did this," but then I never heard anything. Until I got a call on the pay phone in December of 1970. They said—I think it was Senator Harris' legislative aide, Ed Monroe, who I had met before, who called and said, "Senator Harris is thinking of appointing a girl as a page." He gave me a little background. He said, "Senators [Charles] Percy [R-IL] and [Jacob] Javits [R-NY] are planning to do the same thing. We're wondering if you are still interested?" It came from left field because I hadn't heard anything in ages. I said, "Yes!" I was not going to continue at boarding school. I was going back to Oklahoma. I was like, "I guess I can just change everything around." I didn't say that, that's what I was thinking, because it wasn't at that point part of my plan.

SCOTT: What was the timeline? Did they give you a sense for when they wanted you to come?

PRICE: I think the idea was that I start my next semester of school at the page school. They were going to nominate me as soon as they got my consent. At the same time Paulette [Desell Lund] and Ellen [McConnell Blakeman] were going through this nomination process, it wasn't really a process. They were being nominated. We were told "Whoa. You can't come yet." We really went from January to May, it was a "hurry up and wait, hurry up and wait."

SCOTT: So you went back to Oklahoma?

PRICE: I went back to Oklahoma and resumed high school in Oklahoma. I came to D.C. for a press conference once. They kept saying, "You have to come and do this." My parents would hustle around and we would get here and then it would still not be time to start.

SCOTT: And you would go back.

PRICE: And I would go back. That's when there was a lot of press because the Senate Rules Committee was meeting and debating it. It didn't look good for a while.

SCOTT: How much information were you getting? Were you getting the information from Ed Monroe to give you the background of what was happening? Was it more silent on that side?

PRICE: I was getting information. I'm trying to remember if he called me directly or if maybe my parents were contacted and told, "It looks like we are not going to start in February." It would always be, "Not January, maybe February." Or, "Maybe two more weeks, we have to meet with some other people." And then it would be "maybe two more weeks." Then they finally set a date for a significant Rules Committee meeting, which I could not attend but Paulette and Ellen I think attended. There was a time when it looked like it wasn't going to happen, which I don't remember too clearly. But there are lots of articles that say, "Oklahoma girl remains optimistic in spite of Senate actions." Things like that, which I did. They must have contacted my parents because they are the ones who said, "We're not going, not yet. Not next week." Finally it was, "Okay, time to come." They passed it and it went through.

SCOTT: What I have here is a sequence of events. The report comes out of the Rules Committee basically approving the appointment of female pages on May 10. On May 14 that's when Paulette and Ellen—

PRICE: Paulette and Ellen were sworn in on the 14th and I the following Monday.

SCOTT: And that's because you had to get here from Oklahoma.

PRICE: They were both here in D.C. I think that was probably my last day of school, that Friday. I think I finished. Otherwise I would have had to come and then go back again. I think I finished school and then came. Ellen, who was already here, had to go back and finish some things up with her school.

SCOTT: It looks like she literally served one day and then came back in June.

PRICE: I've talked to her about this. We all were juggling the lives of high schoolers. We couldn't just drop it or else we would have to repeat. She had to go back and tie up whatever loose ends she had with her school. I'm pretty sure it was her school. I was able to finish because in Oklahoma we don't go too far into June because of the heat.

I finished and came. What I don't remember is if I went to page school at all during that first stretch. I don't know when page school—I think it gets out in June. I may have gone for a few days because I felt very familiar with it when I came back the next January. I may have gone for a few days with all the pages during my first stint but I would really have to check the records to see. [I did check the records and saw that I attended CPS from the day I arrived to the last day of school for CPS in June.]

SCOTT: The article from the *New York Times* that you passed along to me, May 29, 1971, both you and Ellen speak to the reporter about your experience at the page school, so it looks like you've been going for a little bit.

PRICE: Ellen is back by then, right? Did we talk about the school?

SCOTT: I think so, yes.

PRICE: Ellen went to the school while she was working in Percy's office. But they wouldn't let her serve as a page.

SCOTT: That's right, I saw that she had an appointment in the personal office.

PRICE: Yes, they would not swear her in.

SCOTT: What did you parents think about all this, especially the start and stop? The idea that you would be one of the first female pages, what did they think about it?

PRICE: They were supportive in the way that they got it together. I had five siblings. They got it together to get me back and forth like that and do whatever it took. I think because their lives were also very busy, it's not like they talked to me a lot about it, like how great it was. They were used to it because I had been working on this for a while. I think in a way they were surprised that it was really happening, too. They might have thought, well, like we were saying, everybody has dreams. The governor of Virginia and Senate page. [We were talking about how one of the pages dreamed of becoming governor of Virginia.] But I'm not sure they fully anticipated it would become a reality, either. They weren't talking it up like I had won an Olympic gold medal, or anything. It was kind of routine because I had been thinking about for a while, but also was kind of a surprise. My dad at one point said that he had started introducing himself as Julie Price's dad. [both laugh]

SCOTT: How did your community respond?

PRICE: It was wild. It was wild for me, too, because I was one of six kids and not necessarily accustomed to being the center of attention in any way. All of a sudden I had a lot of press calling me. A TV crew followed me to school, came into my classroom at school. I just did it because it all happened. They came to my house and interviewed me at my house, indoors [and] outdoors. [We] walked around. I think I did it because it was just part of it. In the long run, I think I'm a little photo sensitive as an adult. I understand why children need to be shielded from a lot of press and publicity. Some of it may relate back to that. After a while—and I think the other girls felt this way, too—even when we were pages we would get called from the Senate floor because somebody wanted to interview us. We would kind of look at each other and Patrick Hynes would say, “You don't have to say yes.” He was our boss. We did it because we enjoyed it. On the other hand, I think it was the feeling of being exposed.

SCOTT: In the fishbowl all the time.

PRICE: As an adult I'm not real quick to jump in front of a camera. I'm a little like, “Put that camera down.” Even though I want pictures, too, for when I'm older, of me in them but I still have this reflexive, “Put it down.” We would take the subways back and forth and there would be photographers. It was a short period of time but it was intense. I don't know, I've got to ask my siblings eventually how they saw it. I was, like I said, not used to being the center of attention. I was not the most sparkling of my siblings.

I was an awkward adolescent early on. It was the turn when all of the sudden I was in the limelight for a while.

SCOTT: I could see how that would be very hard to negotiate at that age. It's a difficult age anyway, so that just makes it more complicated.

PRICE: It was a whirlwind, is one way to describe it. I kept trying to live day to day. I had this boyfriend and I had my schoolwork. I know that I felt like I had to be aware. I had to be aware, I had to be good. Teenagers are doing stuff. I had to pass on a lot because I was like, if somebody finds out, that's going to be in the papers. I don't know where I got that from, but I can't do that guys because I'll lose my job!

SCOTT: I know that the Senate debated this resolution to appoint female pages for some time. I know that there was some opposition from some members who voiced a number of concerns, one of them being that this was, at the time, a crime-ridden section of Washington, D.C. And Washington, D.C., was a crime-ridden city. Some senators voiced concern about the safety of the female pages. Others voiced concern about where would the females reside? They didn't seem to be concerned with where the male pages stayed, but the females posed different problem for them. Those particular concerns, I think, were addressed in the final resolution, which forced each member who supported a female page to find them a place to stay and basically to be a sort of father to the female pages in a way the male pages did not have the same relationship with their sponsoring member.

PRICE: In a way it was impossible.

SCOTT: Right. What did you know about those requirements and how did you negotiate those requirements when you arrived here? Where did you live, for example, and how did you find a place to live?

PRICE: I did not find it. I was told that I would live at the Young Women's Christian Home, I think, which I just drove by. I'm sure it's still there but it has a different name. It was a place where a lot of government employees, a lot of young women, lived. It was all for women. You had rooms. I don't know if they were double rooms. I had my own room, washer/dryer. No, not in the room, on the floor. A Laundromat on the floor and a dining hall on the first floor. That's where I lived, which I was used to because I had been in boarding school.

SCOTT: I was going to say that it sounds like an all women boarding house.

PRICE: It was. I was the youngest. I'm sure the pages were the youngest ones there. Most of the women were 18 and older, out of high school. At the time I didn't think about that. That's where we lived. In retrospect, when I read those documents that Fred Harris had taken full responsibility for me, I thought, that is huge. I knew that that was part of the agreement. He'll be in charge of you and you can go. Again, having been in boarding school I didn't really think that meant that he was going to be checking on me all the time because that's not how it works when you are in a group situation like that. Looking back I can see that if something happened to me, he would have been liable. That was huge. I would be interested to know what his thoughts on that were. I knew I could do the job as a page. That wasn't my concern. I didn't really think about the safety thing. I hadn't had any trouble with safety yet. I didn't really think about it except there were mornings when I was walking to school in the dark in 20-degree weather by myself at 5:30 a.m. I was very vigilant. I was a good person to pick for that reason, as were the other girls. We all had these vigilant, aware personalities. We were good choices to start with because there really wasn't enough supervision for children. We were children. The boys didn't [have enough supervision] either. It really wasn't there. It's lucky that we got to do it so that girls could have the opportunity, but it needed work. We were good picks. I was vigilant. I remember looking around and walking to school.

SCOTT: Was this your first experience in a big city? Maybe you had lived in a big city in Massachusetts?

PRICE: I had vacationed, traveled in big cities. No, I was out in the woods in boarding school in Massachusetts. I had only been in big cities when I was traveling.

SCOTT: Washington, D.C., was a very tumultuous place at that time. What did you think of it?

PRICE: I had no concept, no concept. I knew that's what people said. I knew they were worried about us being hurt. I did not understand that because I had no experience. And yet it stayed in my mind when I was walking to school on those mornings. I was very careful. There were times when the Senate would go late and they would sometimes let us go home early, the girls, while it was still light. Or we would be walked home. We were told the pages would escort us everywhere, but that wasn't my experience. There was thought given to how late we worked. On weekends, when I didn't know what to do, occasionally I would walk into the city and walk around. That's when I would remember those warnings about Washington because I could see then that I wasn't quite sure if where I was was safe. I was vigilant enough to stay safe, and lucky, I'm sure. You have to say that we were lucky, too.

SCOTT: You mean lucky to have the opportunity or lucky that nothing happened?

PRICE: Lucky to have the opportunity but lucky that nothing happened. There are no guarantees.

SCOTT: So the compromise that was made to take full responsibility for the female pages, at least in terms of your relationship with Senator Harris, that didn't involve anything specific. He didn't have someone from his office escorting you around?

PRICE: They would check in on me when one of the legislative aides was over on the Senate floor. They would talk to me on my birthday, they would send me a note. Did I have lunch with him, or with someone in the office? Maybe, once in a while. I went out to their house to play football with his staff. His staff knew who I was when I went by there. I would just stop by their office. They may have been doing more to oversee me than I was aware of. They may have been checking in to see if I was doing okay, I don't know. There was no real helicopter supervision at all. And I didn't really need it at that age. But generally as 16-year-old girls go, you couldn't assume that they don't need that supervision. We were a lucky group that they picked.

SCOTT: You brought in this great photo for us of your swearing in ceremony on the 17th of May, 1971. Do you maybe want to say something about that? What were you thinking? What was going on there?

PRICE: It was, like I said, a whirlwind. We flew up. We stayed at a nearby hotel. I remember getting dressed for it and wondering what to wear. Should I put the bow [in my hair]? What to do with my hair? Feeling like a teenager, feeling like I didn't look right, I didn't look good. I had to come over and do it anyway. I came over and followed instructions and I was sworn in.

SCOTT: By the sergeant at arms, I believe?

PRICE: Right, I should know. I may have copies of it. I should have asked Patrick [Hynes] who that man is with us. I don't know who that man is. It must be the sergeant at arms. It must be [Robert] Dunphy or his assistant. Is that Dunphy?

SCOTT: I think it is. I don't know him by sight, but given what I know about what happened, I think he was the one who swore you all in. Senator Harris, did you walk over to this with him? Did you meet him before?

PRICE: We met him there, I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty sure we met him there.

SCOTT: What was he like?

PRICE: He was very friendly. Not someone that you felt uncomfortable with at all. Easy to relate to. I never felt intimidated or uncomfortable with him. Warm. Supportive. I remember when I was a very little girl and he was running for Senate, I believe they had a coffee or fundraising [event] at my parents' house. I was so excited because Fred Harris was coming to our house. I was little. As a little girl I was opening the door, guests were coming in. All of a sudden this man walked in and said, "Hi, I'm Fred Harris." I said, "Oh, Mom, Dad, he's here, he's here!" He was so ordinary that I hadn't assumed that this next person was Fred Harris. But I knew that that was the guest of honor. I knew him when I was really little, not knowing at all that I'd end up working for him. His wife LaDonna was extremely gracious, a wonderful woman.

SCOTT: You met her before you came to the Senate?

PRICE: I met her before, too, maybe at a political coffee [or] fundraiser, whatever that was. During campaigns, I'm sure I met her before. Also, she did a lot of work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I think that's what it was called then. I had an interest in that, being from Oklahoma. I think I met with her about that separately at times.

SCOTT: After the page experience?

PRICE: Before the page experience. Maybe when I was in boarding school, during that trip to Washington with my boarding school, I think.

SCOTT: What was a typical day like as a Senate page? What was that first day like, do you remember it?

PRICE: I remember the very first days. The very first day, I'm not sure if my memories are of that first day. I probably do because everybody was extremely nice to me. Most of the senators would come and introduce themselves to me and say they were glad that I was there. All of this I hadn't expected. I just came to do the job. I think we all were a little bit unaware of the size of what we were doing at the time.

SCOTT: You mean the significance of it?

PRICE: The significance of it. I never would have expected, for example, Senator [Edward] Kennedy [D-MA] is introducing himself to me and I'm thinking, I know who you are! I was ready to go to work for your brother. There's a certain disconnect. Even though I knew that I was the first girl page on the Democratic side, and I knew that's why he was introducing himself, somewhere in my mind it was like, "It's the other way around."

SCOTT: Paulette and Ellen worked for two Republican members, Senators Javits and Percy.

PRICE: I worked on the Democratic side and they were the first two on the Republican side. It was like, why are you introducing yourself to me? [referring to Sen. Kennedy] Then there was [Hubert] Humphrey [D-MN], and a lot of senators that I knew of, Humphrey, over the time I was there, was extremely friendly. His desk was right up front. He would chat with me at different times, ask how it was going. He offered to be my lawyer. If you need an attorney for anything, [just ask me or call me—Senator Humphrey said something like this]. I think he was serious though, in a way, if something came up he would be happy to help me. He would chat with me. The pages, the guys, were very warm and supportive and helpful. They showed me all the ropes. They helped me learn etiquette. I had come from this boarding school in Massachusetts in the '60s and I think I was joking around with them as we were setting up the Senate floor and said or did something that was something that teenagers will do. I might have made a symbolic gesture [laughs] of sorts. That's all I will say and the guys were like, "Whoa." They looked up in the galleries to see who was watching. I only did that once.

SCOTT: They didn't seem to be troubled, it wasn't awkward for them?

PRICE: They were not troubled at all, the guys. Even the senators who I don't think wanted us, like Robert Byrd [D-WV], Senator [James] Allen [D-AL], Sam Ervin [D-NC] did not want us, once we got there they were very cordial and gave us no trouble. One of them, it was either Byrd or Ervin, while they were debating women serving in the military, I think it was Sam Ervin who pointed to me and said, "Do you want this frail young thing [fighting in a war]?" You know? It was one of them in a southern accent, I remember. [laughs] I was used as an example of a female who probably shouldn't be serving in the military or something. In our everyday interactions, I worked for them. They would snap and we took our turn just like everyone else. Whatever they needed, we did. They were very cordial and supportive. They must have seen over time that there was no reason that we couldn't be there. It was something that you had to see it to believe it, I think. I had no problems. Even the cloakroom, we walked right in the cloakroom, in

and out. There was one room back off the Senate floor. There was a press area and a room adjacent to it—

SCOTT: The Marble Room?

PRICE: Maybe, where we did not go because it was for men only. The door was open. We peeked in. We didn't feel particularly intimidated. If someone had said take this in we probably would have. What was the worst? I don't really want to ask that. At that time I thought, "What's the problem?" I've seen guys with their shirttails out. I'm from the same planet. Of course, as an adult I'm aware that, who knows what I might have walked into! We had no problems. The sergeant at arms' office seemed a little touchy about things at times. They did.

SCOTT: Anything specific? Concerns for your safety?

PRICE: Concerns about the rules, I remember, following the rules. Coming up and maybe signing papers and discussing something. It's all vague, but I was aware that they were the disciplinarians, in a way. They made sure that we all behaved and did things right. I did sense that being a girl, I fell into a certain category. The other girls, too. They also managed all the press.

SCOTT: What was the relationship of the press with the three of you new female pages. Did they want to talk to you? Did they take a lot of pictures? Were you singled out in anyway?

PRICE: Yes. We got called off the Senate floor regularly, early on, to have interviews with representatives of different newspapers and magazines and things like that. The boys might have found [that] kind of annoying.

SCOTT: I'm sure! [both laugh]

PRICE: I think they've said that much at times. We got off work to go sit outside. Like the *New York Times* article, we were sitting out on the lawn chatting with the reporter and they were working. I think it still counted as our hours. There was quite a bit of it. At times I think we had mixed feelings about it. Do we really want to get up and go do this or go take a phone call? There may even be a note in that box from the cloakroom saying—I found it looking in these things for you—a note saying that a reporter wanted me to call them. Or there was a reporter on the line. We got to leave work and go get on the phone or make plans to meet someone.

SCOTT: What did the journalists want to know?

PRICE: The same things that you are asking, basically. How did we get to this point? How are we being treated? How is it going? Do we feel safe? Those kinds of things. About senators and things, we were pretty careful.

SCOTT: One of the things I was thinking was that at your age—I certainly would not, at your age, have been able to navigate that world. I just think I would have been overwhelmed. How did you do that?

PRICE: Nobody coached me at all. We all instinctively knew that we could say certain things, and other things we talked to each other about, but we didn't say them to reporters.

SCOTT: What kinds of things did you instinctively know that you should not be talking to reporters about?

PRICE: Our personal thoughts about someone. Or maybe that, let's say hypothetically, if we had passed someone in the hall and they had burped loudly, you know? They are just people! We would not have said that. We might have said, "Senator So-and-so, he's really funny." Or we've seen some interesting things, but instinctively we didn't go into details like that because we had a sense that it could be misused or something even though it's just what people do. But outside of the press we would all joke about it and laugh about it.

SCOTT: You didn't sit down with anyone from Senator Harris' office who said "We're going to—"

PRICE: I have absolutely no memory of anyone saying anything like that to me, ever. I do remember being a little—we would get a little embarrassed at times, the things we would say, like in the *New York Times* article, I'm the one who made the comment about bra burning, but they attributed it to Paulette who was really, I mean, Ellen was really the most outspoken and then me and then Paulette. When they attributed it to her, she was embarrassed, I think. But there wasn't anything we could do. I didn't mind saying that. But that was more out there than the kind of things we usually said. It wasn't personal for anyone except that it was my personal opinion.

SCOTT: It seems like the journalists want to link the three of you to this larger feminist movement that is going on in 1971 and the three of you seem to not really connect with it, maybe because of your age. What is your sense of that?

PRICE: I think we were very much part of it without knowing it because of our age. I had a slight sense of it because the Democratic Party was known to be more in tune with the whole feminist movement, but even I was not all that astute about it except that I didn't want someone telling me I couldn't do something because I was a girl, which is the essence of it. I was experiencing it in real time and in reality and not thinking about it theoretically, at all. I had a vague awareness of what was going on in the bigger picture. The same with Paulette and Ellen. It is interesting when I look back, how they were trying to link us. We were linked in a very real way because we were part of it, but not in our talk. It's interesting.

SCOTT: It is interesting. They saw something there. You hadn't made the connection.

PRICE: We were living it but hadn't made the connection in a theoretical way.

SCOTT: Did the three of you spend a lot of time together outside the page program?

PRICE: Quite a bit of time, yes. Ellen and I at times lived in the boarding house at the same time, so anything we did outside of work we would include each other or on weekends. Paulette lived with her family, but they would sometimes invite me to come out and stay with them. After graduation, Paulette and I took a trip to Disneyworld together.

SCOTT: Did you?

PRICE: Yes, to celebrate graduating. I think my mom went with us. It's funny, she remembers that and I don't. I don't remember my mom being with us but she does. We must have had an adult with us. So we spent quite a bit of time together. We've been back in touch lately.

SCOTT: You have a great picture here of your graduation from page school. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about not only this ceremony but what it was like to attend the Senate page school, the congressional page school.

PRICE: Yes, it was called the U.S. Capitol Page School. It was so different. It was quite demanding to get to the Library of Congress at 6 a.m. or 6:30. It was demanding in the way it was structured. The curriculum was not that demanding. Or maybe it was, I have to say I did not do that well at Capitol Page School because I didn't

take it, it didn't seem like a real school to me. I didn't take it all that seriously. Then I would get my report card and I would think, "This is real school! They are grading me on this!" [laughs] I usually got pretty good grades, you know. They were slipping, I won't go into details. It was a little unreal in that way. We would get there at 6:30. The pages would meet in the basement of the Library of Congress and have breakfast together in the café. Get our trays and go through the line and eat with other employees. There would be a few employees there going to work, but mostly pages. It had to be before 6:30, 6 a.m., eating breakfast. Then we would take the elevators up to the top floor and go to class and the big question was what time is the Senate going into session. If the Senate went in at 10, I think we had to be there an hour or two ahead of time. That would mean, let's say if it was two hours ahead of time, we got out at 8, so we went to school from 6 to 8. That was a long day [laughs]. If they went in early, at 8 or 9, we had 5-minute classes. It was surreal. I do think that though the experience was a great, great experience, I think my high school education suffered a little. I have dreams of finishing high school, not college, I know I did that. [laughs] But high school, I jumped around so much that every so often I would have these dreams of being in one of my various schools trying to get it done. Isn't that interesting?

SCOTT: It is.

PRICE: I understand it now because I did what I had to do to get through and graduate and not too much more.

SCOTT: You didn't have time?

PRICE: I do think that being that age and not being supervised, you get home from work and there's no one that says, "Do your homework." When I was in the school there, Ellen wasn't. You see, January to June of '72, there was no real peer to say, "What's our assignment in English? Have you done it? Let's do it together." It was a very different scenario than a regular [school], whether it was a boarding school or high school, I think you could say I was isolated in that way. I remember looking at my homework and thinking, "I should do this but I have to get up at 4." And thinking I'll do some. I do think it's a young age to be away from home. It was probably more stressful than I was aware of. In order to really study and learn well [kids] need to not be stressed out. I've learned this since.

SCOTT: Were you in contact often with your parents?

PRICE: Regularly by phone. Yes, I was. Like I say, I think it was a great and good thing. I think it was not perfect and that's one of the imperfections. I don't know.

Would I say it's balanced? The shortcomings of the educational structure balanced out? Probably. Probably because we stay there on the Senate floor. I have a real good sense now of how the Senate is supposed to function ideally. It doesn't sometimes. But I have a pretty good sense of that, of what it was meant to do and why, and I have a lot of respect for it.

SCOTT: How long do you think it took you to learn the ins and outs of what to do on the floor and where to go to find an office if you had to do an errand? Was it overwhelming in the beginning?

PRICE: It probably took about one month. Guys [pages] told me and showed me. If you got lost it wasn't a big deal. People would tell you where to go. When I first started, guys would walk me. After you do it so many times, anyway, you know where you are. You know how to get places. You know the shortcuts. You know where to get candy on the way. You know where the bathrooms are. That was not hard. That was not hard.

I think, looking back, what was probably stressful about it was what would be stressful to any child—that I was not aware of—was really being on my own with no real adult support or guidance and not being aware of it. I think that probably my schoolwork suffered from that. One of the teachers at the school took me to a concert one night, which I also didn't understand. She called and we went to the orchestra. [I went] with Mrs. Ulmer. I don't know if you've heard about her but she's renowned at the Capitol Page School, she taught anthropology. I'm sure she was extending herself because she saw the situation. That's not the best thing for kids. I ended up working with children, so I know that now. And yet I was able to handle it and wasn't aware then that it might be taking a toll in some ways. I did it fine. The actual job part was not hard. It was learnable and everybody was completely supportive. I am glad that they now have a better system in place. That makes sense.

SCOTT: They have changed it, I think, largely because many parents I'm sure as well as students were concerned about the level of education, how rigorous the studies were.

PRICE: When the pages get together—the first reunion was so interesting. We all talked about our page school experience. There were guys who wanted to go to medical school and they did eventually, but they had to patch up that time. There were guys that had trouble getting into college who were very smart. It wasn't an intelligence thing. It was an environment thing. The environment that we were in, we weren't able to do our best, really. And yet, would we trade it? Probably no one would trade it. Once you start

applying to colleges and everything, taking all the tests, [you realize] you didn't really have the full—I don't know the word I'm looking for—the full complement of high school courses behind you, education and experience. I don't say that to be critical of the school, really. I think it's great they have the school. It's just that that's where they were in the process.

SCOTT: One of the things that I thought was interesting, in particular, about your experience was that I see that you come in for about six weeks, maybe a little bit longer than that.

PRICE: May into July, I believe.

SCOTT: I see May 17 into early July. Then you got out for about six months and then come back the following January and serve for another six months. What happened?

PRICE: Originally, you see, I was supposed to serve from January until July. That was a typical page term. That is the one that I was appointed for. But I didn't get to start until May because of all the hoopla. Fred Harris was like, "We're sorry, we can't do anything." I guess Barbara Wheeler—"Other people were appointed to come and we only get so many pages that you can appoint." I had to leave when my term was over but I did want to come back and I wrote every single senator. I did. I still have these response letters somewhere, most of them saying, "We're sorry we can't appoint you, we have somebody scheduled for the year." I kept writing and writing and even Harris said that he couldn't reappoint me. But then it changed and I don't know what caused the change. Barbara Wheeler doesn't know, nobody knows, but for some reason it opened up for that spring term starting in January. They said, "You can come back."

SCOTT: Why did you want to come back so much?

PRICE: I don't remember why except that I think I preferred to be in D.C. than Bartlesville. It's not like I hated Bartlesville. I can't really answer that question. But I am sure that I wrote every Democratic senator. Again, I asked, what do I do? I want to come back, what do I do? Probably Senator Harris said, "Write to all the senators" and I did it. [laughs] And I got all these responses. They all had pages appointed so I didn't think that was going to work out either, but it did.

SCOTT: So you came back during your junior year in high school?

PRICE: That was my senior year in high school. I finished.

SCOTT: That's why you graduated here, because you are literally graduating from high school. That's pretty cool!

PRICE: We had a class ring and I meant to bring that but I forgot. I believe that I picked out the stone for it. Somebody was saying that we had to have a class ring for the girls, somebody in administration, and they told me to pick it out and I did. It was a little different from the boys. I don't know if they still have it now or not.

SCOTT: What was that second term like? Was it different than the first?

PRICE: Nope. Same thing, up early. That was when I was walking to school. That must be when I remember walking early in the morning, freezing cold, dark, no daylight savings. That had to be January or February, past construction sites and thinking, "I hope nobody jumps out at me!" I was walking fast.

It was the same. Early to school, hoped the Senate goes into session early. Try to keep up with my homework. I was applying to colleges, too, which I was a little clueless about. I guess I knew it was time and I feel lucky that I got into college, really. I did. Part of that was probably being a page. I was waitlisted at my first school of choice, which was Duke. My husband was on the same waiting list. That's so wild. But we didn't meet until years after. We were both waitlisted and then I was accepted at Colorado College. But when I first was waitlisted and I didn't know about Colorado College, then I got kind of serious. "Whoa, this is not a done deal." I had been distracted, to put it mildly. There had been a lot going on. It's not like today when everybody is applying to 30 schools and they are really focused three years ahead of time. I was like, "Oops, looks like it's time."

SCOTT: What do you remember about the members? Who were the stand-outs? Who were the people who you admired, either because of their politics or because of the way that they carried themselves or related to the pages? What was it like?

PRICE: Frank Church of Idaho I remember as having a huge amount of integrity that you could just feel. I took him a hamburger in his private office—

SCOTT: In his hideaway?

PRICE: Yes, it wasn't a regular place. I just have this memory of being so honored to take him his hamburger. Thomas Eagleton [D-MO] was another one that everyone spoke about and that I noticed. I remembered especially when he was nominated [to be George McGovern's running mate], I remember him as being—he was one that seemed so solid. He was one of those ones that you didn't see on TV a lot but

everyone said he is really solid. He is a really good senator, a good guy. You know, Robert Byrd was attentive and interactive and interesting. He didn't ignore us pages at all. As I said, Humphrey was very chatty and offered to be my attorney. McGovern [D-SD] I was impressed with. I have to say that Ted Kennedy was impressive. He was mid-career then. Who else? There is someone that I'm thinking of. Sam Ervin was interesting. He was such a southerner. I think I became more impressed by him when I saw him during Watergate. But then it all came together. I felt like I knew him. I sat not far from them day after day after day. Who else? A lot of the Democratic senators, [William] Proxmire [D-WI], they had this air of true believers in the good sense of that term. There is somebody else that I'm thinking of. Proxmire is one. Maybe it will come to me. But they were in the vanguard of these liberal movements in a genuine way. I had a lot of respect for them.

SCOTT: Were you aware of the political issues that were swirling about at the time?

PRICE: I was very aware of the Vietnam War. There was lots of debate and some filibustering and lots of bills related to the war. Patrick, my boss, he now has told me I got this wrong but I thought that he had a brother that served there. He, I believe, was in Vietnam. He talked to me all the time about the war. He even showed me his journals, which I believe were either about his brother in the war or about his experience in the war. They were very personal and they blew me away. He would always talk to me about how although the debates revolved around money, the most important thing was the human cost. [Patrick made me] very aware of that.

SCOTT: Senator McGovern being the Democratic candidate that year, he was perhaps the most vocal of those anti-war members.

PRICE: There was the issue of women serving in the military. There were a lot of late nights that revolved around that and appropriations and the budget all relating to the war. I was quite aware of that. It almost just sunk in. You understood it without even studying it because you listened to it all day. Like, if my dad called me at night and asked me about something I was surprised that I could explain it to him. It's not like I was taking notes! It's like, this is what they are going to do. You couldn't not know it after you sit there and listen all day. I was aware, more aware than your average 16 year old that wasn't working as a page or interested [in current events]. I also was interested. There is someone that I'm forgetting.

Mike Mansfield [D-MT]. He was huge. Mike Mansfield was someone who was very understated in his manner but very clear and deep and powerful in his positions. A really impressive majority leader.

SCOTT: To date, the longest serving majority leader in the Senate.

PRICE: That I didn't know. I used to be called up to his office to answer his phones for the secretary.

SCOTT: I had heard this, that they sometimes would bring in pages to do that. I guess when he had his office staff working on something else?

PRICE: Yes, or if they went to lunch or a doctor's appointment or something. I often would be the person called up to man her desk.

SCOTT: So what was that like?

PRICE: Again, I just took it for granted but here would come in Mike Mansfield with a trail of senators and dignitaries and then they'd go into his office and they would acknowledge me and I would answer the phone and take the messages and eat the chocolates in the drawer. I even had the gall to poke the center [laughs] to see if it was good and turn it over and somehow think that maybe she wouldn't notice! But she must have, I don't think that she cared. She kept having me back. When it would get slow I would find the chocolates in the drawer. It was a change of pace, sort of routine work. It's not exciting all the time. Sometimes it gets boring because it's slow and routine, but then the door opens and in they come and even then it's just routine, at the time. When you look back on it, it's like, "Whoa." But it's your job.

SCOTT: What about those times on the Senate floor, maybe during a long debate. How do the pages pass the time?

PRICE: We chat a lot, tell jokes, we would plan our breaks and our lunches and we tolerate it. Sometimes it's boring. I don't remember being able to sit there and doodle, or write notes. You learn to tolerate it. That's when it was amusing to sit by Herman Prager. You'd get this running commentary.

SCOTT: He was one of the pages?

PRICE: He was one of the pages. He's now a professor of history [political science] somewhere, but he was a disgruntled teenager at the time. I was a good listener

and listened to all of his grievances, many of which were right on target, I thought! But most people wouldn't say them. We amused ourselves, but sometimes it was boring, like life.

SCOTT: What about your interactions with Senate staff, maybe the cloakroom or the party secretaries? Did you have much interaction with them?

PRICE: The secretaries, meaning like the secretary of the Senate, the assistant secretary of the Senate?

SCOTT: I'm thinking more like the party secretaries.

PRICE: I don't think that I had a lot of interaction with party officials, though I did go to some big dinners, like those pictures. I don't know if those were congressional, or Democratic Party fundraisers. They may be like you see on TV, those press dinners. I think it's possible that we went to some of those. I went to a cocktail party at Averill Harriman's house. I know! I remember thinking, "Is that a real Monet?" [referring to a famous painting hanging in his home] [both laugh] There was this terrace in back that was sort of graded, different levels, and I was 16 drinking white wine in the back gardens of Averill Harriman's house.

SCOTT: How did you get these invitations?

PRICE: That must have come through Fred Harris' office. I had some contacts with legislative aides, or a page ahead of me who was staying on to work. I don't know, somebody was just like, "There's a thing at Averill Harriman's house tonight. Why don't you come?" Or, "You're coming." That may have been part of his overseeing me. I didn't have a lot of choice, but I didn't want a lot of choice.

SCOTT: How would you get there?

PRICE: I went in somebody's car. I did not walk. It was a townhouse. I did not walk. I got out and accepted a glass of white wine. I wasn't a big drinker or anything. I looked around the gardens. I wasn't sure who he was. [both laugh] Or what the big deal was! I'm not sure that I'd ever been anyplace that had all this original impressionistic art. The art was real. It was in the bathroom, that kind of thing. I took it for granted. That was my life at the time. I just wanted to be a page and here I was.

The cloakroom guys were really, really nice. I had no trouble. They were supportive. They would help me if I didn't know something. We had to punch a clock every morning with our time paper, what do you call that?

SCOTT: A time card?

PRICE: Yes, like a time card. You put that in a machine and it punched it. You would slide it in when you leave and maybe sign it. I did go with a group from the cloakroom to see Elton John once. I liked Elton John and he was playing somewhere in the suburbs. I drove in a car with Patrick and some of the cloakroom guys and I think a couple of wives. We drove out, I don't know where, and saw Elton John.

Everyone was really solicitous [in a good way] and supportive.

SCOTT: What do you think that you learned from this experience that has helped you later in life? What did this experience mean to you?

PRICE: I didn't realize this until later in adulthood. When things would go wrong in Congress, I have this feeling like it's a little bit mine. Like your family home in a way. If you hear that they are building a parking lot next to it or something, you might be upset. At different times, when they have been on the verge of passing legislation or changing the rules, there was a time when they were going to change the rules in a real sneaky kind of way. It was during the Bush administration, they called it the nuclear option. It meant overruling the parliamentarian. I remember very clearly that the parliamentarian rules. What he says goes. You just don't do that. I was very upset by that. Nobody that I associated with [in Pennsylvania] had any clue why I was upset by it. [Scott laughs] It was just when I was beginning to learn to e-mail and I got in touch with pages and said, "Is anybody else upset by this?" "How do they do this?" It's a proprietary feeling. That's what it is. Feeling like I'm overlooking [or watching] them now. It's strange. I think other pages feel a little that way, too.

Not only do I feel that way, but I'm protective of it. I have a lot of respect for the process, a huge amount of respect. I really learned the importance of debate and the value of good debate, and that what it does is that it distills the real essence of problems and clarifies them so that what can come out of it is better than the mess that precedes the debate. It takes time. I began to appreciate that the fact that it takes time is not a bad thing. A standstill is another thing, but the fact that it takes time is sometimes good. Otherwise, if things were rushed into, bad decisions would be made. It takes time to make well thought out decisions. I really gained a lot of respect for the process. When

something seems to challenge it, or there seems to be a problem with it, it upsets me. I'll walk around talking about it. [both laugh]

SCOTT: Have you remained political in your adult life?

PRICE: Off and on, maybe not quite as much as when I was a teenager. There have been years in my adult life when I had been preoccupied with other things and I haven't been—I haven't been disinterested or uninterested. But I've been so preoccupied that I couldn't focus on politics. Or sometimes I've been too busy. You can say that everything is political and I have remained political in that sense for my entire life. Lately I've gotten more involved in doing work on campaigns or elections, when I can. I think after going to college and living longer, I see that change comes in lots of ways other than just the political scene. That's one avenue of change, but the arts move change and educational institutions move change. I was a history major so that is the big question: what are the agents of change in history? It's not just politics or government. That's what I came to see.

SCOTT: You have been in contact with some other pages through the alumni group. Can you say something about that? How did you get in contact with them? When did you get in contact with them?

PRICE: I think it all began with the Internet. I don't think I ever thought I would see the pages again once we all took off on our own lives. Every teen really thinks that you are going to see your friends from high school. And then suddenly 20 years later you realize that you haven't seen them and you may not ever see them. Once the Internet came into existence I think that people slowly started to Google each other and slowly find—at some point I found a page blog, or what did they call it before blogs? A chat room? Something like that.

There was a site where you had to be approved to get in and come up with a name and a password. That was the first place that I got in contact with different people and found some of the people from my era writing in. They were the ones I wrote to when the nuclear option was on the table. They were concerned, too. They would send me information on the history of it. We'd be chatting online about it. "Does anyone know where so and so is?" Slowly people began to be included and they started having reunions. I think I missed the first reunion, that must have been 2004. Once I showed up online somebody said, "Where are the girls? Where are those first girl pages?" I had appeared, I said, "I don't know. Let's find Ellen and Paulette." Nobody knew where they were. We all found each other. The first page reunion we went to was so much fun. We really shared these experiences that so few people do. I hadn't seen these guys in forever.

One of them had stopped talking to me because he thought I was interested in one of the other pages. The first thing I said to him was, “You stopped talking to me.” He said, “You’re right. I was jealous because you were going out with so and so.” It was so wild! We just picked up right where we left off. “Why did you stop talking to me?” My husband had never seen me close down a bar at two or three in the morning. We just had so much fun. We had a reunion this year, which was also a lot of fun and I think they’ll keep having them.

It’s so interesting to hear how people’s lives have developed, or not developed. Hearing how people got beyond page school was fascinating. I had no idea. Here I’m having these reoccurring dreams of finishing high school. Others had to figure out how to get into med school with chemistry from Capitol Page School as their starting point, which didn’t quite cut it. I love getting together with the pages and chatting about things—and we have certain experiences that we don’t talk about. [laughs]

SCOTT: When you went to Colorado College, did you feel like you struggled a bit because of the level of the work that you’d been doing here?

PRICE: I think so. I ultimately made a lot of headway, but in the beginning I was not where high school students really need to be in terms of writing papers. I could read and think, but in terms of writing papers I felt that I had to put a lot more time into it. I ultimately got on top of it and it was a great school. But I look at kids now—where they are when they go off to college. They have a lot more experience in those areas than I did. I would say it was a scramble. I feel lucky to have gone there.

SCOTT: On the other hand you had a front row seat to something that most people would never see.

PRICE: I did and like I said, I don’t think I would trade it because I understand our system in a different way. That’s why it’s too bad that the House program is shut down. I do think we need to be constantly feeding young people back into society who have a real solid understanding. That can’t be bad. Most pages would agree that you get it in a different kind of way.

SCOTT: My sense was that the closing of the House page school revived this alumni group to get together, maybe to petition the House to reconsider their decision? Did you all talk about that?

PRICE: It was getting together before that, but that has become a focus of it now—to try to revive the House page program. They recently screened the new

documentary here and a lot of the talk [after the screening] was related to using the documentary as a tool to revive the program. There are lots of ideas and there will be an effort to do that. But the alumni association was already going and growing and that just added fuel to it and some fire.

SCOTT: What's your sense of how many people who went through the Senate page program are still active in politics or involved here on the Hill or in Washington?

PRICE: Right off the top of my head there is Greg King, Tom Gonzalez, Scott McGearry. Homer (Herman) Prager, like I said, teaches history [political science] to either college students or graduate students. Dan Schwick is in the ministry. Three of those I mentioned are in Washington, I know. We weren't a big group. Out of 12 or 15 sitting on that step, I would say a good percentage have maintained in some sort of role that is either in politics or government or related. That sounds like about a third that I can recall off the top of my head. Some are actually in Congress, I think. Bill Gates was a page. There was a congressman at the screening of the film. But I can't give you numbers. I can tell you that it's an interesting group of people. They are one of the most interesting groups I've ever been with, doing all sorts of interesting things.

SCOTT: If I might ask you a complicated question, what value do you think the Senate page program adds to the Senate, to Congress as an institution, to the nation? It's a big question, but I think it's important to get your sense of it. If the Senate ever decides to revisit the page program, it would be good for the pages to have said something about that.

PRICE: There was a lot of talk about that. One of the things that comes up is that, and I believe there is a congressman in the documentary talking about this or an ex-congressman, but seeing young people every day as part of your work, they are the people who are going to be the beneficiaries of the legislation that you pass. It's going to have an impact on them primarily. It's a really good reminder to everybody that is working in government. That's one thing that comes up. I think that fits in closely with the fact that I personally think that we have a big problem in our culture with how we care for our children and educate them and treat them and how we care for and support our mothers and families. I should say how we *don't* really support mothers and children. I think that to have young people out of sight would be a bad thing. Young people and the people who care for them are not that much on the radar screen anyway. I think it would be really risky to get them out of sight. I hope that never happens because they really matter. They will be the ones to continue the culture and the government of the country. That's not the only reason, it's just also to see them and realize what little human beings are. We weren't little, little, but we were babies, kids. Just to remind people that it's

about lives of vulnerable people, as well, I think is really important. I think they do matter. I think it could also be—if someone put a lot of thought into how to develop both of the page programs, pages could really contribute a lot to the whole culture. It would be reintroducing into the world kids with a level of knowledge like that, if it were really developed and presented well and worked with. It could be even better than it is or has been. It could be a desirable place for lots of young people and necessary, too. So it would be really silly—even if they say we don't need it because we have the Internet, there is plenty to do, I'm sure.

SCOTT: The Senate hasn't made all the electronic and digital improvements that the House has so it's still a different place over here. As you know, they are very different bodies.

PRICE: I will say that the pages know that the issue is not that there is not work. The issue is not money. We all know that. In the House the issue also has to do with the behavior of the grownups and that's not going to get addressed by getting rid of the pages. Those grownups will find new victims and that is ignoring the problem and it's also abandoning children to being victimized. That is really irresponsible, I think. The pages all know that.

SCOTT: Does the alumni group meet with the current pages when they come to Washington?

PRICE: Some of them. When we came we went on the Senate floor—it was so fun—and talked to all the girls. There are so many girls now. We were able to say—there was one from Oklahoma—I was able to talk to her and say, “I was from Oklahoma, too.” They don't know, they have no clue that there was a time when there were no girls. And the three of us together, I think a small group of us, I believe it was someone from your office, took us on the Senate floor. It was so fun, it was great.

SCOTT: Did it bring back memories?

PRICE: Totally. I had to take my son and show him the candy drawer. He's been twice now. The first reunion he was nine. At the first one, they wouldn't let me show him the candy drawer. The second time I was really careful to ask the right people so I was able to show him. That's fun for kids.

SCOTT: How old is he?

PRICE: Now he's 15. The first time I brought him he was nine. He sometimes says he wants to be a page. But he's also an athlete so that would be a problem. It was great. It brings back so many memories. The weird thing is that we were so used to it, we just walked in the Senate, when we came to work. Not now. When we were working you just walked in and walked right into the Senate. Now you have to go through all this hoopla. We were like, "Hey!" It's a time warp. You want to say, "But that is where I worked. I'm allowed to go in there." It's so strange.

SCOTT: What was security like back then? What do you remember about it?

PRICE: Well, they had security but not much. They knew who we were by the way we dressed. They didn't question us. Did we have IDs? We probably did but I don't remember showing my ID much. There were Capitol policemen everywhere and they knew who we were. We walked right into the building, right on the Senate floor all the time.

SCOTT: The pages have incredible access, just like the members.

PRICE: We had incredible access. We would use the credit union for our paychecks.

SCOTT: The pay was quite good, wasn't it?

PRICE: I was paid \$7,000 a year, which for a 16-year-old kid at that time was unbelievable. Again, that was not what I was interested in. I was shocked. The pay was great. We did tend to do what kids do. I still have notepads of Senate stationery. We thought that was for us, too. There was so much of it and it was just sitting in the hallway stacked up along with pens and things. We thought we could take a couple every day and used it for homework and stuff. I still have some of it.

SCOTT: What were your favorite errands to run? Your favorite places to go? Did you have favorites?

PRICE: I did. I liked answering the phones up in Mansfield's office. I liked going over to the Senate office buildings. Mostly it was senator dependent. I liked doing things for the senators that I admired, whether it was getting their shoes shined or bringing them a hamburger, that was fun. I think we went to a state of the union address. Ellen tells me that in that movie, what's that movie? It's not All the President's Men. It's another one where they have the state of the union address. I recently rented it and tried to zoom in on the pages but it's very hard to see. She says we are all hanging over the rail in the back.

It's very hard to see. I have a vague memory of going to it. I was trying to see if I was there? My memory is really vague. What is the name, All the President's Men? It's one of those.

The big dinners were fun that we went to.

SCOTT: Were you the only pages there? Were just the girls invited, typically?

PRICE: As you can see, the guys were there too. Sometimes there was an event and the guys would invite us like dates, but it was not really dating. It was just that we were right there. We could all go but we paired up. That was fun.

It was people dependent. You liked the runs [that's what we called errands we were sent on] where you saw either staff that you knew. Or sometimes that it was the runs that went past the cafes where you could get a snack on the way. Or something like that. One of the doormen in the Senate, I don't know his name, he used to give me perfume. That "Joy" perfume. It is incredibly expensive, I learned later in life. When I left he had this gift for me. He seemed to really like me. When I left he gave me this bottle of perfume. It's called "Eau de Joy" and that was just how nice everyone was. He didn't do it while I was working because that might have seemed inappropriate. But when I left he had this gift for me.

SCOTT: Did your parents come out to get you when you graduated?

PRICE: Yes, they came out for my graduation.

SCOTT: Where was the graduation held?

PRICE: I want to say the Dirksen Building. It was held in a committee room, in a meeting room. We all sat up on the dais, except it was curved. There was a speaker who I don't remember. It was not memorable. Afterwards there was a party. That was it. Everybody went home. At that time I was also running for delegate in Oklahoma to the Democratic convention.

SCOTT: Were you?

PRICE: I was.

SCOTT: Did you make it?

PRICE: I did, which was a fluke of sorts. I was lucky, they needed a female and a young person. I had this experience and I ran as an uncommitted delegate. I liked Humphrey, but I ran uncommitted. The McGovern people got behind me, too, because I was better than the other choices, they thought. I fit the quota. Ultimately I was a McGovern delegate because I voted with him on the California challenge.

SCOTT: You did?

PRICE: That was a huge issue.

SCOTT: Humphrey wanted to split the votes and it was a winner take all state.

PRICE: I voted winner take all because you don't change the rules in the middle of the stream. I thought it through and I thought, you don't do that now, now is not the time to change the rules. That's the right thing to do. Then the governor, who was also a member of that delegation, and Carl Albert wanted to change my vote. They tried to. I went out to get something to eat and somebody came and got me and said, "They are trying to change your vote." I think they thought—they said, "I thought you were with us?" That was that uncommitted thing. I was very earnest. I was like, "I am, but I don't think that you change the rules while you are crossing the stream [meaning mid-stream]. Those are the rules. And McGovern gets those delegates."

SCOTT: What did they say?

PRICE: They were like, "Well, okay." I was more outspoken and confident than I would be now because I saw things more in black and white. "I'm with you because I'm here, but that doesn't mean that I am going to do everything that you tell me to do." Again, I was a little feminist and didn't know it. "These are the things that I believe in."

I voted for Thomas Eagleton, too, instead of Fred Harris, and I walked out and cried because I felt like a traitor. The Harris people were mad at me on the floor. They were. I wrote Senator Harris a letter and explained my vote. He wrote back and told me that I did the right thing.

SCOTT: What did you say to him?

PRICE: I said that Eagleton needed a vote of confidence because he was not very well known. I don't think I said in the letter that it didn't look like Harris was going to get the vice presidential slot anyway, but it did look like that. So that vote would not have been used very well. But Eagleton really needed a show of confidence. He needed every

vote he could get. Like I said I saw things in black and white and I was confident. I voted for Eagleton. I wrote that to him and he wrote back quickly and said that I did the right thing. That I will never forget because I felt terrible. I felt like a real traitor.

SCOTT: Because he had supported you and sponsored you and you had worked for him.

PRICE: Yes, and he was running for vice president and his staff, some of them were delegates and they were kind of mad at me. It is such an adolescent thing to feel like you do the right thing. It's so characteristic of adolescence. You stick with it. That's what I did. [The convention] was another wild [experience]—and there were some pages there.

SCOTT: Other delegates?

PRICE: Yes, because there are pages at the convention and some of them are congressional pages that get there.

SCOTT: To staff the members?

PRICE: They work there. They do other jobs. Patrick Hynes was there that year for something because he was still secretary of the Senate or assistant secretary. The [future] governor of Virginia was there, Mike Partridge was there. I think some others, too.

SCOTT: You went out to Florida? What did your parents think of that? You went out there by yourself?

PRICE: [The reason] I thought of it is because I had to fly back and run for delegate in Oklahoma and then fly back and graduate from page school. I forgot. My family [including my grandmothers, I believe, and Mary Johnson, who had worked for my family and was like a mother to me] was here for the graduation and I went back to Oklahoma and ran for delegate and I remember I sent my dad a telegram saying, "I won!" That must have been when he started saying he was introducing himself as Julie Price's dad! That's about the time because there was a lot of press about that, too. It was short, momentary. I had a busy graduation. I wasn't quite 18 and you had to be 18 to go to the convention. I turned 18 that June, after I graduated.

SCOTT: What an experience.

PRICE: Then I went off to college and became more introspective.

SCOTT: What do you do now?

PRICE: I haven't been working right now, but the work that I do is called, I'm a child life specialist. I work with children in hospitals who are—I do therapeutic work with kids in hospitals. I have been on the “mom track” for a while. I'm looking for part-time positions now and there aren't many. Before I had my son I was working in New York with a pediatric AIDS program. Most people don't know what we do but it is also political in the sense that kids really need some sort of therapeutic intervention so that they are not traumatized just by the experience of being sick and hospitalized. The whole thing can be pretty traumatic because they don't understand. And that's what we do. That's why I have a special interest in children and childhood and the page program. That's why I see [reinstating the House page program] as valuable and why I'm aware of how much children and families are not on the radar screen like they should be, in my opinion. It comes from that. I'm not in politics or government.

SCOTT: But you are still an activist, at least an advocate.

PRICE: I'm an advocate and an activist when the opportunity arises. I recently joined a public policy task force within my profession to look at areas where we might want to be more vocal in terms of public policy. We're just exploring it. I think that's why I'm a good person to have on the task force. There is a former PR person on the task force, a former legislative aide, I think who has worked on Capitol Hill, who is now a child life specialist. She's also on the task force. We're just exploring. We're invisible in some ways because our job is not to draw attention. Our job is to reduce anxiety and get in there and make things better without raising anxiety. As a result we are not all that visible. But we do have a point of view.

SCOTT: That's interesting. You found a way back to a public policy position.

PRICE: It's true. It all ties in. It's interesting because here as a page, I was a child, too.

SCOTT: Is there anything that you'd like to mention that we haven't talked about?

PRICE: I think that we've covered a lot. I think that one thing that I think is important, and this is partly my interpretation, but there is always this controversy about who was first. At the time I have to say that we were all aware that we were the firsts. I was the first on the Democratic side and Paulette was the first to set foot on the Senate

floor. Ellen began working on the Hill first, in Percy's office. We were aware of those distinctions and we were trying to figure out who was sworn in first and who worked first but we were first together and I think that is interesting. There were three senators that did it together. I think that's important to remember in this world of one-upmanship and feeling like it has to be decided that one person wins and somebody else loses. I may someday put together a book that emphasizes this. It was three girls and we did it together. I wonder if it had only been one girl and one senator if it would have happened. That's where I say it's my interpretation. It's possible that it took more than one and it took at least three to get it done.

SCOTT: And from both parties.

PRICE: From both parties, and it's interesting that it was about three girls doing things in a more cooperative kind of way. Though we were rivals a little bit, we also were aware that most of our press stuff was the three of us. In our home states, maybe we were more focused on as singletons, and that's why I was so surprised when I saw the film and stuff [other presentations and books]—that it was getting narrowed down to two. I was like, "Wait. You left me out." I think that's a good thing to remember. Things don't just get done by having one winner and one loser.

SCOTT: The significance is not in the first.

PRICE: The tradition was changed, and this is how we did it. We weren't trying to be the first, we just wanted to do the job. That's another thing.

SCOTT: We are really thankful to you, not only for bringing that to our attention but also for also taking the time to come here and talk to us about your experience. This will be an interesting addition to our collection and an informative addition to our collection. We like to get the page stories and yours is, in particular, a really interesting one because you were one of the first.

PRICE: I'm sure that Paulette and Ellen would be happy to talk to you. I don't know if it's as easy for them to travel. Ellen has ALS, I don't know if you know that? She does. She has made it to both reunions. I don't want to get choked up.

SCOTT: Perhaps at the next reunion.

PRICE: She was in a wheelchair at the last reunion. She has a really interesting mind. She is a really interesting person. Paulette, too. I saw them both at the reunion.

There will be another one. I'm sure that they have things to add that I am not telling you. I'm sure they are willing—it's just not as easy for them to get here.

SCOTT: Good. I look forward to the next reunion and maybe having the chance to sit down with them if they are in town.

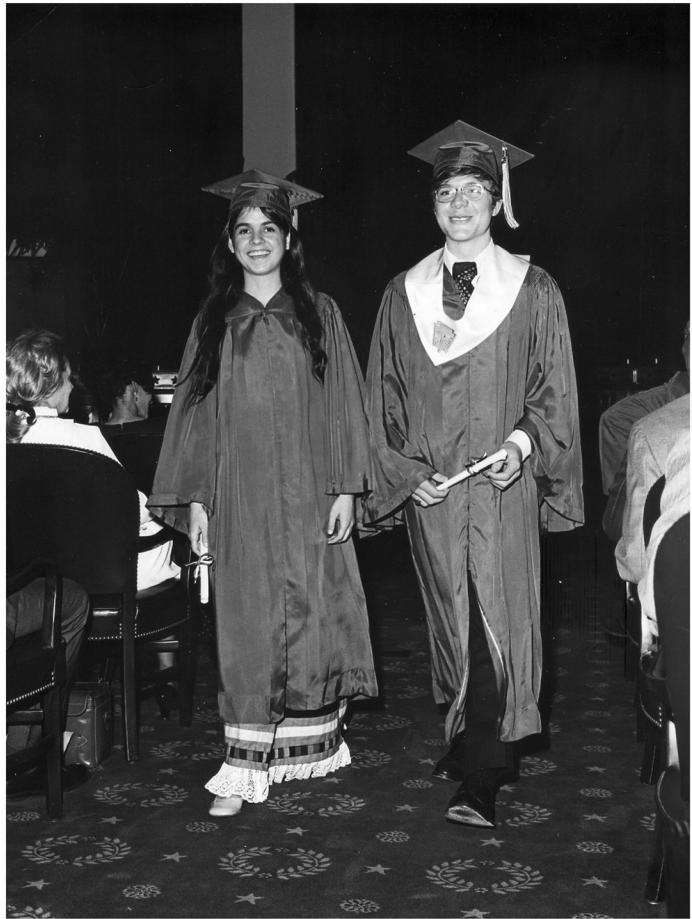
PRICE: You know how to reach me, if you want to reach them at the reunion or whatever, you can go through me.

SCOTT: That would be great. Thank you, thank you so much.

PRICE: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]

[Pictures on the following page, clockwise from top left: Senator Fred Harris (D-OK) attends Julie Price's swearing-in ceremony in 1971; Price (kneeling, far right) and Paulette Desell (kneeling, second from the left) with the Senate Page class of 1972; Price and fellow page attend the Capitol Page School graduation; (from left to right) Price, Ellen McConnell, and Paulette Desell, the Senate's first female pages; Price's Capitol Page School yearbook picture, 1972]



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