

Roger Addison

Registration and Compliance Clerk, Legislative Resource Center

**Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript**

May 29, 2019

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

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Abstract

Born and raised in Washington, DC, Roger Addison spent more than 30 years working for the U.S. House of Representatives. Addison's family had a strong connection to the Capitol—his aunt, Janie Mae (Kelley) Galmon, mentored many relatives while she worked as a chef in the House Member's Dining Room. Addison's familial connection led to a job offer moving furniture for the House in 1988. This position laid the foundation for Addison's long career supporting the work of the Office of the Clerk.

In this interview Addison recalls his childhood in the District. He fondly describes the tight-knit community in his neighborhood adorned with many “mom-and-pop” stores. He also speaks of the civil rights movement and riots in the capital, as well as the mentors he had growing up in the city. After meeting with Congressman Sonny Montgomery of Mississippi (an interview arranged by his aunt), Addison received a job as a laborer moving furniture in the Capitol complex. He recalls how he learned to read blueprints, the comradery he developed with his co-workers, and the intricate scheduling involved in moving furniture after elections before the beginning of a new Congress. As a young African-American employee, he remembers paying close attention to the careers of Black Members like John Lewis, Ron Dellums, and Walter Fauntroy.

Addison used his familiarity with the capital's streets and his District hack license to get a job as a driver for the Clerk of the House. As one of two drivers he spent time on the road and in the Clerk's main office. During this period he witnessed historic events like the shooting of two Capitol Police officers in July 1998 and the evacuation of the Capitol after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Addison also describes the changes to the Clerk's Office when the Republicans took control of the House for the first time in 40 years in 1995. A few years later Addison moved to the Legislative Resource Center (LRC)—an office created in the aftermath of the party change—to take a job as a Public Information Specialist. He outlines the function of the LRC, his specific responsibilities, and his promotion to the position of Registration and Compliance Clerk before his retirement in 2019.

Biography

Roger Addison was born on March 6, 1956, in Washington, DC. His father, Ben Addison, was a contractor and painter, and his mother, Zipper Lena Johnson, was a domestic worker and retail manager. Addison attended public schools in Southeast Washington, DC, graduating from Eastern High School in 1974. Growing up in the nation's capital he lived in a tight-knit, predominantly Black neighborhood with many family-owned businesses. Addison witnessed changes to the landscape of the city, including those brought about by the burgeoning civil rights movement and protests of the 1960s. In 1982, he married Gwendolyn Brown. The couple had two children, Tina Marie and Roger Addison Jr., as well as an adopted daughter, Lashawn. While working on Capitol Hill, Addison met his second wife Cassandra, whom he married in 2005. Addison has three stepchildren from this union: Amorita, Bethany, and Jerry.

In the late 1970s Addison briefly held a job as a dishwasher in the Longworth House Office Building before earning his chauffeur and taxi licenses in the District of Columbia. Influenced by his aunt and mentor, Janie Mae (Kelley) Galmon, who worked as a chef in the Members' Dining Room, Addison followed her advice to seek employment at the House of Representatives. With the assistance of Galmon, he interviewed with Congressman Sonny Montgomery of Mississippi in 1988 and received a job moving furniture at the Capitol. Addison worked as a laborer for three years before accepting a new position as a driver for the Office of the Clerk. Addison's professional experience driving in DC and his intimate knowledge of the District made him a natural fit for the job. From 1991 to 1998 he provided transportation for the Clerk and assisted with other official duties such as bringing documents to the White House and local government agencies.

In 1999, Addison became a Public Information Specialist in the Clerk's Legislative Resource Center (LRC). While at the LRC, he assisted staff and the public by pulling materials from the *Congressional Record* and offering guidance and advice on researching bills. Addison moved to the Records and Registration section of the LRC in 2005 where he served as an Assistance Compliance Clerk. Here he worked with financial disclosure forms helping the LRC move from paper record keeping to electronic files made accessible to the public. Addison finished his 31-year career for the House as a Registration and Compliance Clerk, a position he held from 2012 until his retirement on May 2, 2019. Upon leaving the Clerk's Office, Addison moved from Washington, DC, to Columbia, South Carolina, where he resides with his wife Cassandra.

Editing Practices

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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

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Interviewer Biography

Kathleen Johnson is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a BA in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

— ROGER ADDISON —
INTERVIEW

JOHNSON: My name is Kathleen Johnson. I'm with the Office of the Historian, and today's date is May 29, 2019. We're in the House Recording Studio in the Rayburn House Office Building. And I'm here with Roger Addison, longtime House employee. Thank you so much for coming in to speak with us today.

ADDISON: It's my pleasure.

JOHNSON: This interview is also going to be part of a project that our office is just starting for the 150th anniversary of the election of Joseph Rainey, the first African American elected to the House. To commemorate this anniversary, we're going to be interviewing African-American staff and Members. So thank you for being part of that project as well.

ADDISON: You're welcome.

JOHNSON: To begin with, some biographical questions. When and where were you born?

ADDISON: I was born right here in Washington, DC, at the famous DC General Hospital.

JOHNSON: Okay. And on what date were you born?

ADDISON: I was born March 6, 1956.

JOHNSON: What were the names and occupations of your parents?

ADDISON: My mother is Zipper Lena Addison. My mom held several jobs. She was a domestic worker in her early years and ended her career as a manager of one of the High's Dairy Stores here in Washington, DC. My father is Ben Addison. He was a contractor; his profession was a painter—one of the best painters in the District of Columbia. And they both grew up and were raised in Bishopville, South Carolina.

JOHNSON: What schools did you attend while you were in DC?

ADDISON: My first school that I can remember was J. C. Nalle Elementary School that was located in Southeast Washington. Middle school was Douglass Junior High, and I transferred from there and went to Kramer Junior High. And high school was Eastern High School—all in Southeast Washington, different locations in Southeast, but all in Southeast Washington.

JOHNSON: What was it like growing up in DC, especially during the 1960s?

ADDISON: You know, I have to say, for me, being a Washingtonian, it was absolutely fabulous. I thought about this question. With all the things that were going on in the 60s—throughout the South and even in the North—I was pretty much sheltered from that. I didn't have the experiences that some of my relatives did with discrimination and things of that nature. Being a Washingtonian, I think that we were pretty much comfortable here except, I would say, during the riot. That was a turmoil time. And even then, living in Southeast Washington, I believe I was about the age of 12 when Martin Luther King was assassinated [in 1968]. We were pretty much covered.

But from hearing and seeing my parents, I can remember when my dad had to leave home to pick up my mom. Remember, I told you she was a domestic worker. So she was working in the Shaw neighborhood at a hotel up there, and the riot was going on, and Dad had to actually go get her to bring her

back home. I can remember when, in our community, the first time that I ever encountered a soldier was when the National Guard came into the neighborhood. But they were pretty nice, they were pretty nice. The younger generation—it's hard for me to believe all the things that were going on in other parts of the city, you know, with the riots and the burning downs. Most of the stores and everything were located in the Northwest area of Washington, DC. We had a lot of mom-and-pop stores in my neighborhood, so they were pretty much well taken care of. And to be truthful with you, there were few Caucasians in our neighborhood at the time, and the ones that were there, I guess they had to hunker down and barricade and whatever they had to do. I think I'm getting off track here a little bit.

JOHNSON: No, you're doing fine. Was this something that you discussed with your family at the dinner table or just in your house, either before the riots or after the riots, race relations in the city?

ADDISON: No. We didn't. We didn't because as I stated, we were pretty comfortable in Washington, DC, in our neighborhood. In the 1960s, from my time as a child, as far as I can remember, in my diapers, it was predominantly Black. I didn't encounter a lot of Caucasians at the time, and it was family-oriented. You had husbands and wives and children who would go to school and the older children would look at—grandparents, would be in the home. Such as my grandma, she lived with us. It was a big family home. So being a young guy, I was pretty much protected from those kinds of things. And you mostly saw it on the news then, was that how—it was very devastating when we lost Martin Luther King. It was very, very devastating to the nation as a whole, I would say, because he was a great man. But life continued on. I've learned more about the things that were going on in the city through history and documentaries and things of that nature. Because it just didn't affect my

neighborhood, I mean, from my opinion. Other people may have other scenarios about it. But I'm proud to be a Washingtonian.

JOHNSON:

Did you have any role models when you were growing up?

ADDISON:

You know, I thought about that question, Kathleen. Role models, in my mind, thinking about it, individuals like to think of role models like Martin Luther King, John [R.] Lewis, Ron [Ronald V.] Dellums, great individuals. But in my growing up, my role models were my parents. My role models were—because they were hard-working people—never a day did I see them, my parents didn't act like they were sick. I didn't know that we were struggling because they were hard-working people—not only my parents, but just people in the neighborhood. You see parents going to work every day. You see single mothers going to work every day, taking care of their children. There were individuals in my neighborhood who didn't have fathers. So I was very blessed to have my dad at home with us. But to have women and men who every day went to work, made sure that there was food on the table, clothes on their children's backs. Those are the people that I try to emulate. That is how I was brought up.

My father and mother, they started as domestics; I told you my mom was a manager of a High's Dairy Store. Not sure if you're familiar, similar to an ice cream store, but sell just about a lot of things. Not only she do that, she would hire young people in the neighborhood for summer jobs. The store wasn't far from here, down at Pennsylvania and 15th Street. My parents were entrepreneurs, and that's where I got my entrepreneur spirit. They, for a time, owned a mom-and-pop carry-out delicatessen store, and we lived over the top of the store. And that was in the Shaw neighborhood. I go by there now, and it's a completely different place.

But we lived as a family, and I would have to go from—it's a little history—Fourth and L is where the store was, Northwest. And I don't know if you, they call it Uline, I think, now. An old farmers market, and this is where individuals go to buy their meats and produce and things, and stores and things were there—so I had a little red wagon that I would have to—they started me off at a young age as being an entrepreneur. I would have to take the red wagon with the list of things that we'd need for their store, and that was a challenge. But so to answer your question, my role models were my parents and individuals that I knew that were hard-working individuals in my community.

JOHNSON:

When we spoke earlier this month, you talked about your aunt, and how she worked at the Capitol. I was hoping that you could talk a little bit more about what she did there and if you ever went to visit her, and how that may have influenced you.

ADDISON:

Yes, another one of my mentors. My aunt, she was born Janie Mae Kelley out of Bishopville, South Carolina. And as far as I know, she came here at a young age to try to better herself. And I think that the only job that she ever had was here at the U.S. House of Representatives. She started as a domestic—I don't know her position, but I'm quite sure it wasn't a fancy position at the time. I believe my aunt worked here pretty close to 60 years. She was married. She had two sons, Eddie and Carl Moore. And she married a young man that worked here, Jimmy Galmon. And they both worked here, and she worked her way up to head chef in the Members' and Family Dining Room. Not only did she do that, she was very instrumental in grooming a lot of individuals that work here on the Hill, such as myself—just so many people that she helped and mentored to become productive citizens of this world and this country. A lot of them work here now, and they tell me the

times that I didn't even realize she helped push them to get jobs here. She was very influential. I guess when you're feeding somebody, you got their ear. {laughter} And she was good at that. She was a lovely woman. She also had a famous bread pudding that the Members here loved. And I personally never ate it, but it was a recipe that I was told she obtained from my great grandmother, and I do know for a fact that when she retired, CNN did an interview with her and unfortunately no one got the recipe after she left. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Oh, that's too bad. And you did a little bit of part-time work, you had listed as a dishwasher in Longworth [House Office Building]?

ADDISON: Yes, yes, yes, yes. For a brief time, the U.S. House of Representatives has been a family-oriented place for my family. My uncle's wife Mae Frances Johnson worked here. I've been so blessed to have been a part of such an awesome family. She thought that I could start a career working my way up into the cafeteria system. So I came here for a brief time as a busboy. And it's a totally different place than it is now. A lot of cigarette smoking was going on in the place. My main duties were to bus the tables and after I bus the tables, to wash the dishes. It was a job. It was a job. It was a learning experience for me. I knew it wasn't going to be for me. Remember I told you I had the entrepreneur spirit that was given to me by my parents. And I thought I can do a little better than dishwasher. So, yes, that actually was the very first job that I had here.

JOHNSON: Was that a common thing, not just for your family, but other people that lived close by, to work at the Capitol as far as you know?

ADDISON: If you were fortunate. I think if you were very fortunate, it was a blessing to work in this institution. Everyone couldn't do it, and everyone couldn't

handle it. You have people come in and out. And you probably still today have that. But I could think of no other place that if you put your faith in God first of all and you put your feet firmly on the ground and you grind, you can accomplish a lot of things here in this place here as far as opportunities and jobs. Yes. As I tell you, Kathleen, it's been an institution.

The only person I know who didn't work here was my dad. {laughter} But he worked for the DC government as a painter/contractor. My brother worked here. My brother retired a few years ago. My brother started as a dishwasher, such as myself, and he worked with my aunt over in the Members' and Family Room. After a while, he became one of the waiters. Tony Addison. He was a waiter in the Members' and Family Room, and I just really found that out. We were over there a few months ago. They finally opened it up where you can go in and have a meal there in the private dining area there. And we were sitting there, and he was telling me how he—his job and what he did over there. He ended his career here, working in the U.S. Post Office then, in the Longworth [House Office] Building. He retired about, I think, two years ago. He had a problem with his eyes, so he couldn't handle the job anymore. My uncle Isaac (I) Johnson worked here. My uncle worked here about 40 years in the Office of Botanical Gardens, I believe—until he surmised. I've had quite a few family members here.

JOHNSON: So your whole family history is really intertwined with the House then.

ADDISON: Absolutely and it's a wonderful thing.

JOHNSON: You had mentioned that you had a meeting with Congressman Sonny [Gillespie V.] Montgomery. What do you remember about that meeting?

ADDISON: He was a fantastic individual. He was truly a genuine Southerner with a heart of gold. He truly was a great man. Congressman Montgomery kind of like—

well, as you know, if it hadn't been for him, I don't know if I would have got the job. I know I wouldn't have got the job. So the history with that was my aunt—you want me to tell you?

JOHNSON: Please, yes.

ADDISON: My aunt called me and told me she thought I needed a job. And I told her I had a job. But we'll get back to that. So I came in and had a conversation with Congressman Montgomery, and he asked me a few questions. I can't remember his exact words. The next thing he told me he wanted me to go over to the Annex Two Ford Building and speak to someone over there, I believe John Kornacki was the guy who was in charge over there.

I believe that probably was around April 29th or so, 1988. I believe May 1, 1988, I started working here as a laborer in the furnishing department. And Mr. Montgomery would come down to check on me every once in a while, saying, "I just want to see how you're doing. Make me proud." {laughter} I'd say, "Yes sir, Congressman, don't you worry about a thing. I'm going to take care of this." And I would see him every once in a while, I would stop in his office and tell him how I'm doing. He was asking me my progress, asking me if I was happy. So he was a pretty good guy to get to know and help me to start the career of my 31 total years of working here at the House of Representatives.

JOHNSON: Right. So you didn't interview for a specific job, it was just to get your foot in the door and find a position?

ADDISON: Yes. Well, I don't know if they had a plan, if they planned, or they knew, but I didn't have any idea what the job was going to be. They just told me to come down and talk to Mr. Montgomery, and he told me to talk to Mr. Kornacki. Mr. Kornacki was the chief of Office Furnishings at the time. And

the Office Furnishings is located in this building, down in the sub-basement down there. So I went down there and—my family's down there, that's the root of my career here.

JOHNSON: What were your responsibilities when you first started for your job?

ADDISON: The responsibilities—I don't know if you know, every Congress, everything shifts, all the Members—not all of them, but the majority of them move. When the new ones move, they get better locations or like to stay where you are. So that was our main function, is to make sure that the offices of Members and committees were set up to their specification and their needs. Also a lot of people may not know of, not even notice, when they have committee meetings and things, those rooms are set up daily, and there's a certain way in how you set each chair and the numbers and everything. And that was a daily task that we would do. That was in the beginning of my career. So, yes, basically, we would move that furniture, keep it moving.

From there I guess you would say I got a promotion to work out of the shops—they had three different shops downstairs: the finishing shop, the upholstery shop, and the cabinetry shop. And there's a special crew that they use, and I was pretty much placed in the position to work with those guys to move those unique pieces of furniture to or from the offices. Like when they would build a new Turkish chair for the Member, it would start in the upholstery shop and then we would move it from the upholstery shop over—I'm sorry, it would start in the cabinetry shop, then to the upholstery shop, then to the finishing shop. And then we would take it—it was the three of us, George Moore, myself, Dane Stalbaum, I believe his name is—his father [Lynn Ellsworth Stalbaum] was a Member of Congress too for a few terms here. So we would move that furniture in and out.

JOHNSON: Did those groups, those shops that you just talked about, did you—it sounds like you worked pretty closely together and the people that worked there as well? So you got to know—

ADDISON: Yes, yes. Working in the Office of Furnishings—I think they're called the Office of Logistics now—Office Furnishings, from the shops to the laborers, to the supervisors, it was one big family. It's like a well-oiled machine. If the machine breaks down, everything stops. So everyone has to be in sync on what you're doing, especially during the moves. People don't know the work that those guys do when it comes to moving that furniture. You have to basically know how to read blueprints, how they want to set up—so that's even another part of the plan that I'm not too familiar with, the guys who write up the blueprints to show you where each piece of furniture is to go. So you had to be pretty knowledgeable in knowing how to read blueprints and things. Put that furniture in there and put it in there in time. We can move an office in a couple of hours and have it set up and the Members can go in and take care of the business of the House.

JOHNSON: That's impressive. So for people that don't work here, I know what you're referring to, but can you go into a little more detail? So at the end of each Congress, you're talking about when Members move to a different office, correct?

ADDISON: Yes.

JOHNSON: So that must have been a really busy period for you. Can you talk a little more about what you had to actually do during that time?

ADDISON: Yes, it is actually a pretty busy time. Starting right after the election, sometimes even before the election, around October, September, that's when there's a planning phase by the supervisor. And most of the time, they know

a lot of the offices that are going to move. So around November, right after the election, that's when we would have teams of the laborers, like four-maybe five-man teams—this was in the time that I worked there. Now they've changed it because, see, they're doing a lot of outsourcing now to private industries that help and come in to do it to make it more efficient, I guess, and get it done more quickly than we could do it because I think in the labor room we may have had about 30 guys at the time. So you're talking 30 guys moving three office buildings, Rayburn, Longworth, and Cannon [House Office Buildings] and making sure that it's done and complete.

So, as I stated, what we would do is once we get the blueprints, a team of four, we would go in and talk to maybe the chief of staff or the coordinator for that office just to see exactly what they wanted done. The carpet guys would probably come in before we get in and lay new carpet. The painters would go in and paint before we go in and move the furniture. So we would be the last phase of it. And, as I stated, once we get in there, we would move one office. I don't know if you ever noticed, you would see rows and rows of furniture that would be in the hallways, and people probably were wondering what that would be, but those were staging areas. So someone needed a left-hand credenza—secretary's desk—we can go down the hall, pick one out, and take it to the office. And granted, this was in the early days. I think they use a lot of modular furniture now. I don't know if they're using a lot of the wood furniture like they did—maybe in some offices, but not like they used to.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that there were probably about 30 guys. Were the laborers in furnishings—was it all men at that time?

ADDISON: Yes. Yes. When I first started working here, there were no women down in the shops at all. Times have changed. And it's a good thing because they have

a lot of dedicated women that work down in there. Some of them are even supervisors now. At one time, I don't know if women wanted to do that job, but in today's world, if you're capable of doing it, why not? There's not a lot of them moving furniture, but in this particular year of Congress, I've seen quite a few of them. I've seen quite a few of them.

JOHNSON: And for the men that were there, I'm just trying to get a little more background on—mostly younger; what was the age like and the racial diversity?

ADDISON: We had people of all ages there—men, young men, I think the earlier age probably was in the middle 20s, and we had guys there who were 60. We had all nationalities working there at the time, come from Southeast Washington all the way from King George, Virginia, and down Waldorf [Maryland] and Solomon's Island [Maryland] and things like that. People came from all over. Some even came from as far as Baltimore. But it was a melting pot of fantastic men at that time. We still keep in touch with one another. Some of us have moved on. Some of us have gotten a little old and sicker, but for the most part, we still try to keep in touch with one another. It's a family there. It's a family there.

JOHNSON: Did you find that the House was a welcoming place for you to come and work, especially as a young African-American man?

ADDISON: I did. Remember I had Sonny Montgomery to protect me. {laughter} In life, you always have discrimination. But with the personality that I have, and who I am, I try to get along with everyone. And before they knew it, they liked me, so they couldn't help themselves. But in all sincerity, I didn't notice a lot of hatred or bigotry or racism, in that nature. You can't do that here in this House. You can't. You won't make it here. You know, it's just not the

place for that. It's just one big—even the Members of Congress, and I'm only speaking from a person for what I've seen through my 31 years here on the Hill, we're all human. We all have our different agendas and things on how we want this country to run. But believe me, I've seen times when they talk and break bread together—the Republicans and the Democrats and the Independents—all at one time, breaking bread. They put the politics aside for a moment. Like, for instance, the baseball game that they have, when they can let their hair down. I can't imagine how these men and women that run this nation that we're in, the load that they have on their chests and their mind and their bodies and spirits. It's a lot. It's a lot to take care of us, as Americans. I'm getting off track, you've got to help me here. {laughter}

JOHNSON: No, that's fine. You mentioned the [Congressional] Baseball Game. Did you go to any baseball games?

ADDISON: I did. I did. It was very exciting. In my earlier days, I would go to several of the games and watch the Members. It was fun. Some were pretty good too. Some of them were pretty good. Yeah, especially—I went to a few when they even had them at RFK [Robert F. Kennedy Memorial] Stadium, and that's been a while ago.

JOHNSON: You're holding a sheet of paper there, and that has some African-American Members listed on there. So when you first came to Congress in 1988, there were 23 African Americans who were serving in Congress. And I was curious to know if any of those Members maybe served as a mentor or role model or that you were interested in their career. People that you worked with that you would follow what they were doing on the [House] Floor or maybe in their district. Was that something that ever happened for you?

ADDISON:

Well, just about all of them here as Black men and women. One that really stuck out in my mind, and I didn't get to know him personally, it was years later that I spoke with him, was Ron Dellums. When Ron Dellums was here, his presence was just magnificent. I mean he was this tall statue of a man. He would walk into the Longworth [House Office Building], and I would watch him walk into the front of the Longworth, and he would stand there for a minute and just look. And I said, "Oh my God. That guy looks like he's full of power." So he was one that I followed in his career. And I told him that years ago, and he kind of smiled at me. He never said "thank you," but he was present.

All the Members of Congress, Walter [Edward] Fauntroy, he's a Washingtonian. He's been here as long as I've been here. He's been on the ground prominent, and he's also worked with Martin Luther King. I follow his career. I even attended the church that he has in the Shaw neighborhood for a couple of events when he was the pastor up there. One of my, the deputy chief of the Legislative Resource Center [Corliss James] was his chief of staff as well. Kweisi Mfume, he's out of Maryland, Baltimore. Just his presence—how he would talk, so eloquent on the House Floor and so passionate for the people of Baltimore. I found that very fascinating.

John Lewis, John Lewis, he greets me like I'm his brother. There's never been a time that I haven't seen him in the hallways, even from my earlier days that he wouldn't stop and have a conversation with me even till today. When I told him I was retiring, he kind of smiled and he said, "Well done, well done." He's a great guy.

So all these individuals on these lists—[George Thomas] Mickey Leland, I have a picture of him in my home that I picked up. Someone gave it to me because he died in that plane crash, and he was one that I was watching. He

was one who I think would have been a powerful person more so than he was if he hadn't had that accident. And I keep that picture near and dear to me.

There's so many of them—Charles [B.] Rangel. Heck, he worked here what, almost 60 years? How can you not follow a great guy like that? One that I don't see here, who, I don't know if she was here when I was here, but Shirley [Anita] Chisholm. Shirley Chisholm was a pioneer out of New York, and I saw her a few times. As a matter of fact, they have a picture of her walking down in the Capitol Building. I stood by the picture and did a selfie. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Her portrait? That's a beautiful portrait.

ADDISON: Yes. {laughter} I got a selfie with her. And if I'm not mistaken, she even was going to run for President.

JOHNSON: She did run for President [in 1972].

ADDISON: So imagine back in that time. That probably was, what, early 80s? And this woman, this Black woman, had the insight to even want to run for President at the time. You know, that was something. So this list, this list is a list of powerful people, and it was just an honor to just be able—John Conyers [Jr.]—just an honor to be able to walk the same halls as they had. But I did notice, not only these individuals' faces but Members in particular, I would watch them walk the halls, and I can tell and see the load that they were carrying. The American people don't know that the load these 435 people do to keep this country, the great country that we live in, I'm a patriot. I love America. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Here, let me take that for you.

ADDISON: Thank you.

JOHNSON: So next I wanted to ask you about how you came to work for the Clerk's Office. How did that happen?

ADDISON: By the grace of God, first of all. God always has you mapped out in your life and what you want to do. I truly believe that. From the time you're born until the time you leave. So how did I come to the Clerk's Office? Remember when I first started working my 31 years consecutively here, the Clerk was in charge of everything. The Clerk was in charge—there wasn't a CAO [Chief Administrative Officer]. And the Clerk at the time I came was Donald K. Anderson. Donald K. Anderson's a fantastic individual. I speak to him regularly now.

So I'm in the labor room, doing labor—also, just to backtrack a little bit, my background, I also have a chauffeur's license and a DC taxi license here, so I did that for a great while. The entrepreneur in me, I wanted to be out for myself. Donn Anderson would come down to the labor room at certain times and just meet and talk to the guys there. Give us pep talks and things of that nature, and I would see him, and somewhere I was told that he had a personal driver that would take him different places. And I'd tell him, "Well, Mr. Anderson, one day I think I want to be your driver." And he would tell me, "I don't think so, I have a driver." And, "Roger, it's good that you want to." "Okay, Mr. Anderson, we'll see."

So I'm just doing my job, and this other guy, David, I can't remember his last name, I just saw him recently. When I first started working here, Kathleen, I was still driving a taxi. I had three children, no health insurance, driving a taxi. So I got this job here as a laborer. The job started me with \$12,000 a year back in 1988. I felt it was fantastic. But I was still driving a

cab eight hours after I would leave here. And David told me that he got a job driving for Donn Anderson. And told me he was making a good little bit more than what we were making at the time. I said, "Well I sure would like to try that." Unfortunately, I think that David got sick.

Let me backtrack a little bit if you don't mind. We're still moving furniture. Remember I told you that we were moving the special furniture from the upholstery shop and the cabinet shop. It had to go up to the Member's office. And one of my crew members was George Moore. George Moore knew that I had a desire to drive the Clerk. So right after the last move, I believe, I can't remember the year that it was, we were doing some touch-up work, and one of the Deputy Clerks was William Long at the time. He had a room off the Rotunda of the Capitol. And me and George, we just so happened to deliver some furniture there. And he told me, "Why don't you go knock on the door and ask him if you can have an audience with him, talk to him and tell him your desires." "No, I don't want to do that. I'm not going to bother him." He coaxed me, and he pushed me, and he literally pushed me to the door to knock on the door. And I knocked on the door, and Mr. Long opened. He's a nice guy, had a big beard. He's rubbing the beard. "Mr. Long, I'd like to have a moment of your time if I can." He looked at me and he said, "Sure, come on in." So I went into his new office and was sitting, and I told him my desires of becoming a driver for the Clerk. I told him my credentials of having a chauffeur's license and a DC hack license. Being a Washingtonian, there's nothing about this city that I don't know. So he kind of rubbed his beard, and he said, "That's very interesting, but at the moment we don't have anything." And remember Mr. Anderson was telling me that he had a driver. He said, "But I'll keep you in mind."

Back up a little bit more. During the moves, I told you we had team leaders. The team leader that I was working with at the time was Nathaniel Tolson. We worked really well together as a team, moving the furniture around. He would give me one blueprint, he would take a new blueprint, and we'd span off and take care of what we had to do with the other guys we had. So Tolson was offered the job as driver for the Clerk. And I said, "Oh, my God. {laughter} That's my job!" But I couldn't be angry with Tolson. Remember I told you, in my life God always had things planned for me, for anyone, everyone. Tolson got the job I believe around December. And I do believe around February I got a call from the Clerk's Office to come up and talk to them. And they told me that I had the job as the second driver. And Mr. Anderson said, "Report to work tomorrow, and wear a tie." And I told him I didn't have a tie. He reached in his desk and pulled one out and said, "You have one now." That's the kind of guy that he is, you know? So that was the beginning for me transitioning from a laborer, furniture mover, to working in the Clerk's main office.

Now, working as a furniture mover, it was a great experience. I wouldn't change it for the world. As a matter of fact, just before I retired, the Clerk has a newsletter, *The Chronicle*, and it liked to headline different activities within the organization. And one of the things that they did, they had a contest: who could answer a particular question about Congress. And the prize would be that I would give them a tour of the under-workings of the Capitol. It was two groups of them, and I took them downstairs. I made sure that I spoke with the supervisors of each department down there, and I took them down to the shops. And they were able to see just what happens and how the furniture and everything is made down there. The guys gave them a great presentation from the upholstery shop and the finishing shop, the cabinetry shop. Heck, there were some things that I hadn't even learned. They have a

machine down there—former Clerk Karen Haas told me, “Roger, when you take them down, make sure that they see the horsehair that they stuff into the Turkish chairs.” You got to be kidding me! So they actually have a machine that they used back in the early 1800s down there, they modernized it a little bit, but they actually have horse hair that they bring in, I can’t remember where they bring it from, and they run it through this machine, and it makes it like hair. It crumbles it up and they stuff it in the chairs. So they were able to see that.

That was just a great adventure to be able to take a group of people down to see that. Because when you’re upstairs, you don’t know what goes on downstairs. Most of the people that work here have no idea those shops are there. So I was very fortunate to be down there with those guys. This chair, I probably moved one of these chairs here because they last forever. I’m sorry I got off track again.

JOHNSON: No, that’s a great story. And the idea of the combination, too, of some of the modern technology in those shops, but that they still maintain a lot of the way things were done years ago.

ADDISON: Yes. Michael Dean is the supervisor, head upholstery guy down in the upholstery shop. He was fantastic down there. Barbara Small is the supervisor for the laborers down there. Darren is the supervisor for the cabinetry shop. And they have a new guy down in the furnishing shop, I cannot—I’m not sure of his name, but it’s just a great history down there. I’ll take you down there, you want to go?

JOHNSON: I would love to go. Yes. {laughter}

ADDISON: Absolutely. We’ll work that out.

JOHNSON:

So now you're one of the drivers, you and Mr. Tolson together. What was an average day like for you? Did you have an average day when you were in the front office working as a driver?

ADDISON:

The average day varied. Tolson would work from 7 to 4. I would be there from 9 to 6. So it could be a busy day, moving from different government agencies or to the White House or just moving about. One of the other things we did, we would take documents and things from the main office to the other sections of the Clerk's Office. Those were the duties that we had.

So Tolson and I started in the Capitol, in the hallway, with two chairs and a table with a telephone. And we would sit there and wait on the telephone to ring because when the telephone rang, we knew that it was time to go. One of the duties that we would do—and Tolson and I were the only ones that did it—the leadership have vehicles that have to be maintained. That was one of our duties, to make sure that they were maintained. Oil changes, if they had a little bump or scrape, we'd have to take it to the body shop. It was a place in Greenbelt, Maryland, I believe called Ball and Ball that would install all of the telephones that were in the cars. Even at this particular time, Tolson and I were the only ones that did it. We would take the Speaker's vehicle to this particular shop. They had what they called a STU [Secure Terminal Unit] phone put in it. And I'm not sure, but I was told that the STU phone was a direct line to the White House. I do know they had two keys. One key was kept by the officer who was driving the Speaker, and the other one would be in the car. So that was a very important job that we had. Just for them to trust us to even do that says a lot.

We would take it—the Speaker's car had special glass that they would put in there. We would take it, and they would do it there. And Tolson and I were the only ones that did that up until, I don't know, I think they changed it

where only the officer who was driving could do it. But that was very exciting to be able to pick up the Speaker's new car or the Whip's new car before they even get in it and drive it. I loved it, to be able to drive that car. I'd say, "Oh my goodness, I'm driving the Speaker's car!"

JOHNSON: But they had their own drivers, this was just for the maintenance?

ADDISON: Yes, that was just for the maintenance. We didn't drive them.

JOHNSON: So you would drive Mr. Anderson and other people in the Clerk's Office?

ADDISON: Mr. Anderson—basically the deputies and Mr. Anderson. And if he had a meeting where he would invite a chief from one of the different departments, they would go with him. One of the main things that I would like to do when I was driving was I can take them to the White House and pull into the White House gate and sit out there among all those Secret Service. I thought that was neat. You know, just being a little boy from Southeast Washington, it was great. It was great.

JOHNSON: And you mentioned Mr. Tolson, and it was just the two of you. What was your relationship like?

ADDISON: Tolson was like a big brother, he was like a father, and he was a friend. Sometimes we would fuss like family because he was a meticulous kind of guy. Every once in a while, maybe I might want to take a shortcut. Tolson wasn't having it. {laughter} He would chastise me about it, and I would tell him, "Tolson, we got to go outside and have a talk." And he'd laugh at me. He wouldn't go. {laughter} But we're friends even to today. We're friends even to today. He is, like I said, a friend, a brother, and a father figure. We were like thick and thin, Tolson and I.

So going to move forward a little bit, when I left the main office to go to Records and Registration it was very hard for the both of us to not be together. Because we worked, Tolson and I worked under Mr. Anderson, Robin Carle, Jeff Trandahl—three different Clerks as their drivers. And we had special relationships with each and every one of them.

You know one of the things that Mr. Anderson and his deputies used to do at Christmastime—these guys were so fantastic that they would go into their personal pockets and give Tolson and I a check for Christmas. That was awesome because they didn't have to, but they did. {laughter} And we looked forward to it. {laughter} And after he left, that kind of stuff stopped. But they were fantastic. So Tolson is a very good friend of mine. I'll tell him you asked about him when I talk to him later on.

JOHNSON: Definitely.

ADDISON: You know Mr. Tolson. There's no one like him.

JOHNSON: No. For my job interview I remember him picking me up and driving me places I needed to go. So it's one of my first memories.

ADDISON: Yes, absolutely.

JOHNSON: How would you describe the atmosphere of the Clerk's Office—the front office and then just the larger office under Donn Anderson?

ADDISON: Under Donn Anderson the atmosphere was fantastic. When Donn Anderson was Clerk, the Democrats had power of this House for a long time. So it was kind of laid back. Mr. Anderson was a people' person. I don't think there were too many people that he didn't know their name or would try to find out their name. The main office, I mean Christmastime, the Caucus Room

would be one big party, and the Clerk would sponsor it. But also this was during the time when you didn't have all the rules and regulations that we have now on gifts and things. They were not as in place as they are now. So a lot of things would—beer makers would bring in beer and stuff, so they didn't have to pay for it out of their pockets. But when I say a party, I mean from the laborers all the way up to the highest staff would be in this party.

[A 15-second segment of this interview has been redacted.]

Mr. Anderson is, he is near and dear to Tolson and I. We all talk regularly. At least a couple of months we talk to Mr. Anderson just to say, now that I'm retiring, I'm planning on going to see him out in California—he's waiting—my wife and I.

JOHNSON: I'm sure he would like that.

ADDISON: We exchanged—well, my wife and him, I don't write any Christmas cards, Thanksgiving, and things like that, but they do. They do every holiday, every birthday, they exchange [cards], and he never misses a beat.

Now Robin Carle, she came in when the Republicans first took office. That was a very devastating time here on the Hill for everybody. Democrats, I won't forget that we, you know in that election in November, we were all in the main office, in Mr. Anderson's office, and he said, "Well, you guys can go home. There's no need in hanging around." And the next day the bottom dropped out. The Republicans took over, and things changed drastically. For two years you would see people coming in and out of the main office and either you would get—you'd lose your job, or they would reorganize and send you somewhere else. So that was very unfortunate, heartbreaking just to see people come in. I got to the point where, in the main office they had a bench and about 4:00 or 5:00, if someone was coming, sitting on the bench,

that didn't look too good for them. They didn't know that, but me being in the office and seeing it.

But I don't think that that regime had any ill feelings. They were just doing, I guess, what they were told to do. They had to reconstruct and reorganize. And at this particular time, we didn't have the Legislative Resource Center. We didn't have publications and things of that nature. It was a total different—so they got rid of some, and they incorporated a lot. Say, for instance, in the Legislative Resource Center, Records and Registration wasn't a part of Public Information; they had their own team. They were located in the Longworth Building. The Document Room wasn't part of Records and Registration; that was under the Doorkeeper's Office. They abolished the Doorkeeper's Office, right? So you had all those people who worked in the Document Room and other sections that were eventually merged with Records and Registration which came into being the Legislative Resource Center.

So from what I understand, everyone had to be re-interviewed and reapply for those jobs. Fortunately for Tolson and I, we didn't have to do that because we were in the main office. But not to say that it wasn't stressful because they were trying to figure out if they needed Tolson and I at this particular time. And Mr. Anderson called us in his office and told me, "You guys just hang tight, stay low, do what you're supposed to do, and we're going to see if we can't explain to them exactly what you're doing here." And it worked out.

JOHNSON:

So this change—if anyone's—when they watch this or they're reading this interview, so this was the first time in 40 years that the Republicans had taken control of the House. So there's a lot of reorganization, certainly for staff, the way you're describing it, a lot of uncertainty.

ADDISON: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did your day-to-day job change at all when the Republicans were in the majority and when Robin Carle was the Clerk?

ADDISON: For the most part, it stayed the same. But I also knew that I had to do something to make myself noticeable and to be useful to this organization, especially with the reorganization that they were doing. Just to back track a little bit, there was a guy who was in charge of—Jenay Patch took me under his wing and started teaching me programming and computers because at this time you didn't even have a mouse, you just had the keyboard and Shift [+] Eight [keys], so at lunchtime he would take me downstairs in the basement, the cabinetry's office, and teach me how to set up charts and things of that nature. I started keeping charts and records of all the work Tolson and I were doing for the vehicles just in case someone would ask me, "What do you do here?" "What is your job here?" "Well, let me show you. This is what we have, this is what we do." Fortunately for us, it worked. Jenay was sort of like Cheryl Muller. Cheryl Muller is the manager, employee manager, I'm not sure.

JOHNSON: Human Resources.

ADDISON: Human Resources, yes. That's what Jenay did. So he helped, he helped me a lot to get into computers because I wasn't using computers at the time. I didn't have any need to because I was a driver. I'm good at what I do. But you have to row with the flow. If you can't bring something to the table, where you going to go, what are you going to do?

JOHNSON: So at this point now you've worked under two Clerks. So you had Donn Anderson that you've talked about and then you had Robin Carle. How

would you compare their leadership style and how they ran the Clerk's Office?

ADDISON:

It's totally different. Remember Mr. Anderson was in a position that was held by—members of the Democratic Party held for 40 years. Robin Carle was coming in at a time where it had to be reconstructed, reorganized. So there was a totally different atmosphere there. When the Members of your party send you in to downsize, to reorganize, and to make things work better, as they would say with the American people, that is a total different aspect of how things are run.

Remember, I'm just a driver, so I don't know what these people are doing in the offices. I can see things that's happening. I can see people upset. I can see people losing their jobs. Not only were they in the Clerk's organization, but they had a department called the Folding Room down there where they had dozens of people that worked. And most of them lost their job. A lot of people that worked under the documents, Mr. [James T.] Molloy, they lost their jobs because they came over, reorganized.¹

So the Clerk's Office, it was a different atmosphere. It was a very stressful atmosphere for a while until they got it together. I think there was a Congressman [James Allen] Nussle, who used to come into our office all the time who was probably one of the administrators. Scared me to death, I had no idea what this guy was going to do when he come past the office and see me and Tolson sitting in the back there. "What are these guys doing?" "Do we need drivers?"

JOHNSON:

But no one ever had that conversation with you?

ADDISON:

Not with us personally. No, I take that back. Yes, yes, I did have a conversation, a little while longer in the process, a guy came and asked me

what was my job and what was I doing with the computer? And what did I have on the computer? And I told him, “Well if you have a moment, I can show you.” And that’s when I opened up my little program and showed him my charts on the work of the cars. That was the only time that that happened. So they pretty much, Tolson and I were pretty safe I would say. I know they thought about it. I know that they wondered if they needed two drivers. But after they got into the—they knew that we were a part of that main office that had to continue on.

JOHNSON:

You worked under—I just want to make sure we touch upon this before we get along too far—three other Clerks. I think you mentioned each of their names: Jeff Trandahl, Lorraine Miller, and Karen Haas. Can you talk about each one of them and then just how their leadership style was unique?

ADDISON:

Jeff Trandahl was the next Clerk. He left for a while. He came in with Robin Carle. He left to run the CAO’s office for a while. So that was almost like another reorganization after Robin left. He had to come in and do some reconstructing and things. But no one lost his job. No one lost their jobs at this time, and I think Jeff is another people’s person. He’s about employees. Now at one particular time, it was a partisan office. So like when Donn Anderson left, it was expected that everyone that worked for him had to go, even the drivers. They were going to bring in their own team—same thing with Robin Carle. So I do believe, I was told that Jeff Trandahl abolished that. He worked with the Members of Congress, and it wouldn’t be a partisan office for the individuals that were working in there. That was a great thing. He was a fantastic person. The organization, as far as I’m concerned, ran great. Wasn’t much that I saw where—he offered people opportunities to do other things. You could move about in the Clerk’s

organization pretty much if you applied yourself under Jeff Trandahl. I'm one of those individuals that were able to do so.

So a little bit about Jeff Trandahl. My transition—I worked there for a few years under Jeff. And I kind of felt like my time in the main office was coming to an end because there wasn't much more of growth for me there. And I'm thinking, "What can I do? I have to do something to apply myself. There's something for me to do here." And the Legislative Resource Center [LRC] had been formed. So I had another very good friend of mine, they worked in the main office that I would talk to, Jacina Hayes. We would talk a lot, as today we're still good. I talked to her this morning. And I told her how I was feeling. And she went, "What do you want to do Roger? Where do you want to go?" I said, "I don't know, I know I got to do something. You know they got a new office over there called the Legislative Resource Center. Those guys look like basically they don't look like they're doing too much over there. I can go over there and do that!" Not knowing all that they did over at the Legislative Resource Center, which is a tremendous job. So she said, "Why don't you talk to Jeff?" I said, "Well I think I will at the right time." I talked to him a little while later, and he said, "Well what do you have in mind, Roger?" And I told him my desires and he said, "Okay, we'll think about it."

Two years passed, and he thought about it. And he called me in the office and it just so happened someone was leaving the Legislative Resource Center. And he said, "Are you ready to go?" I said, "Go where?" "The Legislative Resource Center." "No, I'm good." I'd forgotten all about it. And he told me, he said, "No, Roger, this would be great for you. This would be an opportunity that you can't pass up. It's going to open many doors for you."

He said, "I want you to go over there, put your best foot forward, and learn all that you can, and it's going to be okay." Reluctantly I went.

It kind of felt—two things happened to me. I felt a little relief off my shoulders because when you're in the main office, you're at 500 percent because you have dignitaries and everybody that's coming in and out of there, so you have to be on top of your game. That load was relieved a little bit from me. And I said, "I feel funny. What's going on?" So I wasn't in the main office anymore. And then when I got to the Legislative Resource Center, the guys over there were not as receptive to me being there. I think maybe they thought I was a spy {laughter} from the main office. I worked over in the main office for many years. "What are you doing over here?"

JOHNSON:

So was that considered an unusual move for you to go from the main office to the LRC?

ADDISON:

Yes. Yes. I mean you don't go from the main office to the LRC, you leave the LRC and go to the main office! You know, I went backwards. But I was moving forward. So I went over to the main office [of the LRC], and I had to sit there just to get an understanding of exactly what the public information specialist did. The public information specialist was there for the public and staff. So they would call for *Congressional Records*, and they would call for guidance on how to research a particular bill of that nature. They would come in for documents and things. They would come in and want to read the financial disclosures of a certain Member. So we would have to direct them to those different things that they would be looking for.

In the beginning, it was more research for me because as I stated, the guys in the beginning didn't trust me. But after a month or so, I guess they kind of figured, "Well this guy's coming over here to work. We're going to have to

teach him a little something now.” They would put me in the corner, and they would give me literature to read about public information section. I do a lot of reading. Anything that I put my foot in I have to read to understand what’s going on. So I did a lot of reading, and I stayed in that particular position for a few years—public information, got pretty good at it, too. Yeah. So we were talking about Jeff and the LRC.

JOHNSON:

Okay, so we’re talking about how you started with the LRC, but before we get too far along with that, I had asked you about all the different Clerks that you worked under. And I know that you were already with the LRC when Lorraine Miller and Karen Haas were Clerks. But can you talk about what it was like to have them as Clerk and their leadership style and how it may have differed from their predecessors?

ADDISON:

Very, very different. Karen Haas I believe came after Jeff Trandahl. I’d left the main office by then. She was a very nice person. I can’t speak too much on their work style on how they do things. Karen Haas, I would say, was meticulous when it came to the performance evaluations. You could not send a shabby performance evaluation to Karen Haas. So she was more into detail. If you send it over, it was going to come back to you if it wasn’t complete. That’s when the performance evaluation really took off. And they really wanted to know what you were doing in the office. I think she was a perfectionist that came in. I was told that she read all those performance evaluations. There was no lacksadaisy about that at all. She would come over to the office, and we would have all-hands meetings, and she would keep us informed of the day-to-day things at the Clerk’s Office. But at this particular time, it’s different than working in the main office, so I didn’t have a lot of interaction with Ms. Haas. And that’s when our all-hands meeting would occur. The organization seemed to be flowing well, flowing so well that she

became Clerk for a second term. So she had to do something right to come back. {laughter}

Lorraine Miller was the first African-American female Clerk of the House. I met Lorraine Miller years before that. She had some work done on some furnishings. Me and the boss of the furnishings shop went in to help her take care of that. She's a very personable person. She was all about the employees as well. I do believe you attended that team-building exercise we had over at the ballpark one year.

JOHNSON: I did.

ADDISON: Yes. I think I saw your picture just the other day.

JOHNSON: Really?

ADDISON: {laughter} That's one of the things that I did. I would take pictures and pictures. People hated me for taking so many pictures. But I do have pictures of that team-building exercise. That was one of the things that was really nice that Lorraine did. So once again, I can't really speak on their—personally on how they ran the offices, the main offices, because I wasn't there. I just knew that they would interact with us in different ways. Like that team-building thing that we had with Lorraine, that was the very first time that ever happened, which was very nice. It relieved a lot of stress that day. It was a beautiful day down at that park. I can tell because I have the pictures of all you guys and your faces and how you were looking that day. {laughter}

So, yes, two different styles, two great bosses. There hasn't been a Clerk that I've known that wouldn't take the time to speak to you or get to know you a little. And that was a good thing. If you have a boss who doesn't have a

personality or didn't want to know their personnel, that's not going to work—even the one that's here now [Cheryl L. Johnson].

JOHNSON: One other thing I wanted to cover while you were still in the front office was the tragedy that occurred on July 24, 1998.

ADDISON: That's when it was, 1998?

JOHNSON: 1998, the shooting that occurred. What do you remember about that event?

ADDISON: Yes. [I remember] every single thing, every detail of it. It was a terrible experience for all of us. That was like 9/11. That was like 9/11 for us here on the Hill because both of those individuals were fantastic. I knew both of them personally. I spoke to both of them personally each and every day. Officer [Jacob Joseph] Chestnut was sort of like Tolson, meticulous and detailed to his duty and his job. He was a tall, African-American man—held his head up high. And he would man that front, that East Front, I think it was, door by himself.

At this time, I used to smoke cigarettes, can you believe it? And I would go out to have a cigarette break right on the East Front there. Or sometimes I would just walk out to get air. Now Officer Chestnut, I don't care if I stood out there for 10 minutes or two minutes, I would always have to go back through the metal detector. He would never allow anyone to enter without going through the detector so—he's standing right there watching me all the time. He would still make me go through the metal detector. "Officer Chestnut, why are you making me do it?" "Because that's what you have to do, Roger." So he was a professional, very much so. And Officer [John] Gibson was a fantastic—I know he was a family man. He loved his children. Officer Chestnut was a gardener. He would bring the produce from his garden in and share it with us.

So on this particular day, it was very hot, and I decided that I needed a little air, so I went out to take a little walk. And I decided that I was going to go over to the LRC just to take a look around and see what was happening. I had no idea that I even wanted to work at the LRC at this time. I just was taking a walk and walked over to the LRC. We had, Tolson and I, had pagers at the time, and I—let me back up a little bit. Talking with Officer Gibson—they were getting ready to go on break, summer break. And I spoke to him. He told me he couldn't wait. Officer Gibson was standing outside at this particular time. I think this maybe was around 12:00, 1:00 when I saw him. And he told me, "Roger," he said, Officer Gibson, and he said, "Roger, just as soon as I get the Members off for home and they leave today, I'm going to pick my kids up, and we're going to Disney World." I told him, "Fantastic, that's great." He didn't make it. He didn't make it to Disney World.

So I went over to the LRC, and I get a text on my pager, and it's the Clerk, Jeff Trandahl. He asked me where I was. And I told him I was at the LRC. He told me stay in place. He told me there was a serious accident that happened over in the Capitol Building. So from what I was told that day, the guy walked in, he didn't go through the metal detector, he stopped, and he walked back out. He ran back in and assaulted Officer Chestnut. And at this time, when you get past that metal detector, if you make a sharp left, there's a door there. That's the entrance to the Majority Whip's office. Remember I told you at one time Tolson and I had a little desk and chair. Well that used to be our little section at one time.

So from what I understand Officer Gibson heard the commotion, and as soon as the guy opened that door, that's when they exchanged gunfire. And unfortunately, Officer Chestnut and Officer Gibson were murdered at that time. You would never meet two better men, family men and dedicated

officers to this institution. The East Front was covered with flowers, it was covered with flowers. The Clerk's Office decided to do something as far as pins. So they had some pins made up with the American flag on it. And the young lady who was the office manager in the main office at the time was Judy Snopek. And she told me she had a task for me to do to go out to Easton, Maryland, I believe, to pick up this package. I had no idea where I was going. No idea what it was. They didn't have GPSs and things. I had a map! {laughter} So it was way out [Route] 50, way past Chesapeake; it was about two hours away! I thought, "No way. You couldn't get these pins somewhere else?" So I went out and got boxes of them, and they got them for the Members and everybody and they were wearing them on their lapels. I still have mine. I have it with my memorabilia. I don't throw anything away.

So that was terrible. Like I said, it was just as bad as 9/11. They had a procession that rode through the Capitol after the funeral and everything. And I remember seeing Congressman [Thomas Dale] DeLay in the back of the car in tears. He was actually in tears. He was a very personable person, too. He loved his job here. And him and Officer Gibson were really close. He didn't go anywhere without Gibson. I'll never forget that, when I saw him going through that procession, and he was in the car, and he was in tears. It was a terrible thing.

JOHNSON: What kind of effect did it have on the staff? So you mentioned some of what happened afterwards with the pins and the flowers. Was there a change in security? Were people a lot more on edge or concerned about security?

ADDISON: Yes we were. Yes we were. Remember this was before 9/11, and yes, we were very much concerned on our safety. I've had that concern even up until today of our safety, of the people's safety of this place. I mean, look at the times we're in. They're worse now than ever. And then it was just you had to be

cautious. You would watch people, look at people and kind of watch their movements and kind of hunker down. I can tell you one thing, I wasn't walking around as much after that. I wasn't hanging around the East Front or any door for that matter after that. It took us a long time before we felt comfortable. I think at one time they might even [have] locked the doors into the Clerk's Office. It was a very trying time. But as all things, time heals. But we still have to be cautious here and of your surroundings and everything.

JOHNSON:

When you were talking about your time at the LRC, and it sounded like it was a bit of a chilly reception I guess would be a way to describe it. Were these people mainly from the Document Room that started in the LRC, or were they from all different places in the House, do you know?

ADDISON:

No, I think most of them came from the Doorkeeper's Office, the Document Room, especially Public Information because they handled all of the *Congressional Records* and documents and things of that nature. So most of them there were Public Information came from the Doorkeeper's Office. Records and Registration was a part of the Clerk's Office. So those were the individuals, and it was only a few that handled financial disclosures, travel disclosures of that nature. Public Information mainly handled *Congressional Records* and statement of disbursements. And like I said, were there to help individuals with the terminals, where they can get on and log in.

Back before technology has taken off the way it was, it was paper-based. A lot of paper was moving in and out of that place. So they had to record all the paper that came in. And individuals, reporters and things, would come in to do research. So I think there was about four terminals down there they used where everyone would come in and do their research, print the papers that they were needing, and the guys at the front desk would give them receipts and take the cash. Yes, most of them came from Documents.

JOHNSON: Okay. And that was a question I wanted to ask you when you said reporters came in. Who mainly was using the LRC at that time? And maybe how did that change over your time in the LRC?

ADDISON: Well, in my time in the LRC, it hasn't changed. I don't think it's changed now. You don't get a lot of regular individuals come in to use those terminals because they don't know about them in the first place. Reporters and staff are the individuals who utilize the work stations, come in the morning to check on the records of lobbyists, but mainly I think—and you get a few just regular citizens that come in and check it out, but the terminals were mostly used by reporters and lobbyists. You would have staff members coming in to look at financial disclosures that their bosses had previously submitted because they don't keep copies of them. So they need records where they can go back and verify that they had done certain things on their financial disclosures and maybe make amendments to it.

JOHNSON: And then you moved, so you didn't stay in Public Information, you shifted. So can you talk about why? Was this something that you wanted, and then how did your responsibilities change?

ADDISON: Well, I've always wanted to improve and better myself and to be quite honest, better salary. They had a job—one of the things that they do in the Clerk's Office is they have a DocuTech in the back, and it was manned by two individuals at the time. It still is today. The DocuTech is mainly used to compile a variety of *Congressional Records* and things of that nature. And I thought that was something that I would have liked to have tried. But fortunately or unfortunately, it didn't work out, someone else got the job. And a job came open for assistant registration and compliance clerk. So I, as well as other individuals, submitted resumes for the position. And remember, I had been with the Public Information section for a few years; I was pretty

much adept on what was going on with the Records and Registration Department as well. And I applied for the job and was interviewed three times by the Clerk, the chief, and the deputy chief and was fortunate enough to be granted the position of assistant registration and compliance clerk, which mainly consists of assisting the compliance clerks.

We deal with financial disclosures, contribution reportings, LD-203s, contributions of any kind of contributions, of who you—lobbyists or organizations give a certain amount of money too, I think it's \$250 or more, you have to report that on these reports. What else do we have? We have the LD-2 quarterly reports that are filed by all registrants to submit their income or their expenses. And at this time, it was all done by paper. Everything was done by paper. So we would have to go through each paper, and I'm talking bins and bins of paper, of documents. So it would come into the office at different times. When I first started, it wasn't a quarterly report for the LD-2, and it wasn't an LD-2 or -3, it was just a LD-2 that would come in twice a year. So twice a year, they would bring it into the office, and we would have to stamp them in and make sure that they were correct. And that would start also downstairs with the guys in the Public Information section as well before it gets to the Records and Registration department, they would handle that. Make sure that it's stamped in and everything; put it in the proper bins for lobbyists or the organizations.

Then it would come upstairs, and we would go through them, make sure that they were stamped and everything, put them in chronological order and alphabetical order, and from there they would have to be scanned. And the reason why you're scanning them is that once they're scanned and approved, you have to scan them, you have to index them, and then you had to verify. And you're talking bins and bins and bins—20, 30, 40 bins that five people

are going through. So once that's done, you scan them, and then the supervisor or someone he would designate would verify that they're indexed properly. Once they're indexed, the supervisor would inform the Legislative Computer Systems [LCS], and they would upload them on to the terminals downstairs. And once they uploaded them to the terminals, that's when they become public information. Everyone can come in and take a look at it. And as I stated, most of them that would come in would be reporters or people who wanted to know exactly what individual registrants were doing and who they were lobbying and what they were lobbying on behalf of. So that was basically what we did as assistant registration and compliance clerks.

JOHNSON: Did that process change much over your time there?

ADDISON: Absolutely. Absolutely. It has changed tremendously. Now remember, in the earlier days, it was just the LD-2 quarterly report, which was filed every six months. Now it's changed to a LD-2 quarterly report where it's filed four times a year. And you have the LD-203 contribution reports which are filed by lobbyists. They have to disclose whether they're making contributions to Members of Congress or other entities of \$200 or more. You have to file this report stating that you do or you don't. If you do, you have to list every one of them and who received this contribution. If you don't, it's just lickety split. That's for the lobbyists as well as the organizations. It's not done as much with paper. It's mostly electronic now. You still have—say you may have had 40 bins at one time previously in the years, you may have five bins. So it's changed drastically for the better part. Not to say that the workload hasn't stopped because you still have to go online, you have to make sure that they're filed.

So now what happens is, once the quarterly report is filed, say you have 10,000 registrants that have to file, well out of that 10,000, 2,500 may not

file. You know you have individuals who want to be lobbyists or want the name as a lobbyist, but they're not as diligent at filing their reports as they should be or don't file them at all. And they don't understand the gravity that that has on them or the penalties that they may suffer. Because what we do, and they're probably doing it upstairs [in the LRC] right now, you may have 500 individuals who may not file a report. You may have 500 lobbyists who may not file a report. So we go through that list and see who has not filed. We go through their mailing list and make sure that we have the correct mailing addresses for them. And each one of the staff in the Records and Registration Department then has a bulk of individuals that they work with personally to address these letters and send them a letter. So unless we put the name and fix the names of these particular lobbyists or registrants who haven't filed their reports, we send it back to the Clerk. She looks at it, she signs it off.

The next step is they get a letter saying you haven't filed. You have 60 days to comply. Sixty days from there, we're going back, and we're looking at them again. Some of them are going to file, and some of them haven't. We send another letter to them stating you have 30 days to comply with this issue that you haven't filed your report. Thirty days from there we're going back into the system, the five of us, they're upstairs, and we go through the ones that haven't filed again. From that point, it goes to—it leaves us, and it goes down to the Attorney General Office for the District. And once he receives it, his office will send these individuals down and tell them that you're not in compliance. And if you're not in compliance, this is what can happen to you—up to \$250,000 fine, up to five years in jail. And when they see that, boy do they get the call in. {laughter}

JOHNSON: So, it's out of your hands at that point.

ADDISON:

It's out of our hands at that point. Well, it is, and it isn't. Because so now, they're going to call, they're going to call us five back that's upstairs, the assistant registration and compliance clerks and the compliance clerks, they're going to call us back, and they're going to tell us that they filed. They know that they filed. So then we're going to have to go—they have a tremendous system up there now. We have two screens where we can look and research at this time with the numbers that we have and the names, and we can tell them exactly when the last time they filed a report and what they have to do to file this report. And then we tell them we can help you if you want help. We can help if you don't know how to do it. We'll walk you through it. But this is one of the things that I would do to try to keep individuals from having to deal with the Attorney General down there in downtown DC. I would walk them through it for the most part with their personal passwords and things of that nature. They have—a lobbyist has a unique user ID consisting of a few of their first and last name with a number and they create a unique password that they create themselves. We don't have that there. But we have the ability to, if they forget their passwords, to reset it. And then they can reset it. But we don't have that information, as far as their passwords. And then we can help them get into the system and file their reports.

I have individuals—it's unbelievable these people that handle so much money and so much detail. That the simplest things, to file reports, that they can't do. I have individuals that I've—going back to Jeff Trandahl, he told me this would be something that would be very good for my career, and it helped me to establish so many contacts with individuals from all over the country that I've become associates with. They come into town, and we have a cup of coffee. They come into town they want to buy—I can't take that.

{laughter} I can't do that. But let me get you a cup of coffee, I buy me a cup, we buy it, and we sit, and we talk. I know they miss me up there. {laughter}

JOHNSON: I'm sure everybody misses you.

ADDISON: But I left them in capable hands. There's a few—one in particular, Mr. Tuttle, Dan Tuttle out of Utah. Dan Tuttle's company is the only salt mine company in the western hemisphere. And I did research on it and what they use that salt for, there's so many products, even the medicine that we have. There's so many products that it's used for. And the only competitor I think is either Japan or China. But he can't file that report without me. {laughter} So, it's changed for the better. There's not as much paperwork, there's still scanning, there's still scanning the paperwork that comes in because some people just don't believe in modern technology and don't want to use a computer as much as they can. But it's so quick.

JOHNSON: I just had a couple questions before we hit our wrap-up.

ADDISON: Yes. Thank you.

JOHNSON: So technology—you've been talking about it when you've been describing your time in LRC. So when you started in 1988 and all the way until when you just retired earlier this month, what are the biggest technological changes that you've seen?

ADDISON: Everything. Everything has changed. Remember even starting back when I told you when I was first learning to use a computer, you had to shift F8; you didn't have a mouse. When they put a mouse in my hand, I thought that was rocket science. Just from the use from our cell phones that we have. Everything that we can do on a computer now, we can do from our cell

phone. Modern technology is rapid. If you send a wrong text, you can't get it back. You know, it's done.

And as far as the Office of the Clerk, it's helped tremendously, it helped us and helped my former co-workers and friends who have to deal with all that paper. Modern technology, when I say we had a lot of bins and things, I mean, can you imagine sometimes we would have to wear gloves just to flip through all those papers? It would make your hands rough. And it was just an awful feeling.

Can I go off for a minute? I want to tell you something. We didn't touch on this. 9/11 was, as you know, awful for us here. We were all down in the public information section, at 9:00. The TV was on. We were watching the monitor to see the House Floor, and you see that horrific plane crash. We're standing there, and we're looking like it's unbelievable. And then the second one. We were all in total shock. Didn't know which way to go, didn't know what to do, anything of that nature. We went home that day, and the next day we had to come back to work. That's the dedication that people had here on the Hill. We all had to come back to work. And we had to continue with that paper.

Then what happened, anthrax. We had to deal with that paper and that anthrax, not knowing what was going to happen. Not knowing if we were going to get affected. Even when they shut us down for about a week, we had to come back here, each and every one of us, and deal with that paper. It was terrible. We would take the envelopes and the paper that we would get, all kinds of mail and stuff. We would have to open it, and they would irradiate it, and it would crumble in our hands when we had to open it up. But that's what you call dedication. That was dedication for us to have to do for each and every individual that was down there. The regular public didn't know

that. Down there every day, opening that mail that was crumbling in your hand, and we were wearing gloves, and we were wearing masks.

JOHNSON:

That's something I wanted to ask you about. So for the 10th anniversary of 9/11, we interviewed a series of people from Pages all the way up to the Speaker of the House at the time. What do you remember about your evacuation and how you communicated with people because everyone that we talked to had a different story.

ADDISON:

It was for a few moments, before they told us that we could evacuate, we were stunned. We didn't know what to do. It's crazy! They told us we can go home. I went down to get my car, and I didn't live far from here, I lived in the Shaw neighborhood. And it took me about three hours to get home. It took me about three hours to get home. What I remember was my mom standing in the door crying because she couldn't get in touch with me. She didn't know where I was, didn't know what happened. And the next thing that I remember was my friend, who worked in the main office with me, Jacina Hayes, stuck downtown and didn't have a way home. I was fortunate enough to go back and get her and made sure that she was safe.

All I remember seeing was a lot of military men that particular day in downtown Washington. And all I can remember hearing was jets overhead, but I couldn't see any. And it was just chaos. It was just total chaos in downtown Washington. It was almost, it was gridlock. Everything was almost at a standstill. So I ask me how I was able to come back and get Jacina. God knows! {laughter} It just happened that way. Everything was closed down, even as far as Maryland. She lived in Maryland, and the malls and everything had closed down. So yes, it was a terrible day, terrible day.

JOHNSON: And I asked you about the shooting in 1998 and the effect that that had on staff. What about 9/11, what kind of impact did that have on the Clerk's organization and in your own experience?

ADDISON: Well as I stated, we were all dedicated employees. It affected us a lot. I'm not sure if we came back the very next day or the next day after 9/11, but it wasn't more than a day after 9/11.

JOHNSON: They were in session the day after.

ADDISON: Yes, yes. So we were here. You were expected to be here. No one missed coming to work. No one missed coming to work. We were a little apprehensive, but life had to go on. You had to. You just had to. Not that you needed a job, but you just had to because that was expected of you. And I can only speak for myself. I couldn't have not wanted to be any other place except here because this is what I was supposed to do. If you were to fall, if we were to fall, and you say they were in session, if we were to let those terrorists of the world watch, say that we crumble, I don't think they really wanted to close when anthrax, hit but they had no choice. You had to. You had to because you were really putting people at risk with that anthrax. But, like I said, we came back after they gave us the all clear, which we felt really wasn't clear. If it's clear, why am I wearing gloves and masks? But we did that as well, and we persevered, and we moved on. And here we are today.

JOHNSON: I know this will be my last chance to ask these questions, so I just wanted to follow-up on technology. When you were in the front office and you talked about you and Mr. Tolson having telephones and so you'd wait for the call, what about as time went on and maybe you were away from the desk, how did people get in touch with you?

ADDISON: Well we had beepers in the beginning, and you had to make sure that once that beeper go off, you don't—one thing, you had to be really close. You couldn't go, just leave, I couldn't always just leave and go to the LRC. Most of the time they had to know where I was. So you might be delivering other documents to other offices or maybe I'm on a quick break, but I wasn't, Tolson and I weren't any more than two or three minutes away when we couldn't get back, if that long. After the beeper, they gave us a cell phone.

JOHNSON: Was that a BlackBerry?

ADDISON: Yes. Yes. Yes, a BlackBerry. That was our means of communication, and we would keep that with us 24/7.

JOHNSON: Do you remember if that was before 9/11 or—oh, that had to have been before 9/11 if you were working in the front office then.

ADDISON: Yes.

JOHNSON: Okay, so you had it then.

ADDISON: Yes. So 9/11, I was in LRC. So they took all that away from me. I didn't have it.

JOHNSON: Right, because not everyone had BlackBerrys at that point.

ADDISON: No, only when I was in the main office did they allow us to have, Tolson and I, BlackBerrys. Before BlackBerrys we had the beeper. By the time we got that BlackBerry that was like gold in technology. And then we had—now, when we had the BlackBerrys we had the phones in the Clerk's vehicle. So if we were in the vehicle, and they paged us, we can call them right back. We pretty much knew how to keep in touch with the technology. It was pretty awesome.

JOHNSON: So just a couple of retrospective, wrap-ups because I've asked you so many questions.

ADDISON: That's okay, I love it.

JOHNSON: Thank you. Why did you decide to retire?

ADDISON: Well, it was time. It was time. My time here—there's nothing else that I can do here. And I think there's another calling for me. On that avenue, and my wife told me—my wife retired two and a half years ago. {laughter} And she was ready. She was ready. And personal reasons, I have my mom that I have to think of. She lives with my wife and I. And I need to give her some tender loving care. She's not getting any younger. As a matter of fact, she's in a rehab home now, today. When I leave here, that's where I'm going, to see her.

And I just knew it was time. I think I'm set. I'm a man of not a lot of means, but I don't need a lot. I know I'm going to be fine. I think there's something else that I have to do on this earth before I leave. I don't know. I think it's going to have to do with people. I'm a people's person. I think I have a lot of love that I can share with the world, and I want to give to—I tell people I want to give to the kids. I don't know where I'm going to go on that avenue, but there's so many kids in these cities that don't have a good foundation, good leadership. And I'm one, being a Washingtonian, African-American man, that I can tell them, "If you apply yourself and you believe in something, you can accomplish a lot."

I just saw on the news today this young lady, 14 years old, has been accepted into Spelman. She's on her way to college. It's out here for all kids—African Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics, Asians, they need leadership. You talking about technology, I think they need to downplay it some now. I think it's

just too prevalent in people's lives, changing lives—on the computer all day, on the Apples or whatever all day long. I think they need to scale it back a little bit and get back to nature. Get back to going out, playing some baseball, going to play hopscotch, going to the rec center, you know.

That's one of the things I used to do when I was in school, besides playing music. I didn't tell you that about my family, we're all musicians. One of my brothers is a musician, I'm sorry, music teacher here in DC, the public schools. And they're both two of the most influential jazz players in this city today. And that stemmed from my parents. I played trumpet in school.
{laughter}

JOHNSON: Do you still play?

ADDISON: No, I don't. I don't. Ironically, years later, my son picked it up and was pretty good at it. That's another thing I'm going to do, my dad played guitar, so I have an acoustic guitar. I'm getting ready to take some more lessons.

JOHNSON: Nice.

ADDISON: Yes. I've always picked at it, but I think I'm going to try to get serious.

JOHNSON: You have always been well known, from the time I started and even before I began, for having an incredibly positive attitude in the Clerk's Office and just throughout [the Capitol]. How did you maintain that positivity in such a stressful and sometimes partisan, unfriendly environment?

ADDISON: Well, there's two sides in me. I sometimes get down, but I've been blessed to have people in my life that I can talk to. People here on this job, that's always been here for me—my wife, my mom, my father when he was here, my brothers. So when you don't see this smile, something's totally wrong,

{laughter} and then I have to talk to someone. I have my church and my pastor that I can talk to. I'm not a Bible scholar and all that stuff, but I do believe that there's a higher power, more than what we are. We didn't make all this without a higher power. So I try to keep all that in front of me.

And my demeanor, I can't help it, that's just who I am. That's just who God made me to be. At some times in my life, it didn't work for me because I was bullied as a child too. But even through all that. And you talk about bullying, whew! You're looking at one that was bullied. But it never changed who I was. So that's who I am. I can't help it. {laughter} You know, it's just Roger.

JOHNSON: Well in 31 years here, what do you think your lasting legacy would be? If someone were to call up your name and say, you worked here for more than three decades, what would be your lasting impact?

ADDISON: I've heard so many things about what people thought of me. But I think—I don't even know if this is a legacy, but the smile that I would bring to people. And how I treat people and I how I try to make people feel. That was told to me, and I said, "Talking about me?" {laughter} My smile and how I try to treat people. And it's all genuine, it's all true. There's very few people that I come into contact with that—there's very few people that I anger, very few people that I anger wherever I go. So I've been blessed.

JOHNSON: That's all I had for questions. Is there anything you wanted to add that we didn't cover?

ADDISON: Well, it's just been a great opportunity to know you, Kathleen, and the wonderful person that you are. Thank you so very much for leading me through this. It's an honor to sit here. See what I mean? God works—a little guy from Southeast Washington. I don't know if you know, but I'm talking Barry Farm Southeast kind of guy {laughter} to be here, to be able to do this.

There's a lot of us here. Anyone who sees this, there's a lot of African-American men that work at this institution and all over this great world that are very dedicated husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers and love America to the day that we die. It's not everything that you see on the news. We're a different breed. Thank you.

JOHNSON: Thank you so much for being part of this project.

ADDISON: All right.

JOHNSON: I'm so happy that we had a chance to do this.

ADDISON: Thank you.

JOHNSON: Thank you.

NOTES

¹ James T. Molloy served as the House Doorkeeper from December 31, 1974, until the position was terminated in 1995.