

Bill Goodwin

Eyewitness to History

Eyewitness account of the shooting in the House Chamber on March 1, 1954.

Interview recorded October 20, 2005

GOODWIN:

And it was just quiet. And as I was standing there in the archway—it goes from the Chamber to the Democratic Cloakroom by the phones there, where I was assigned—I was just standing there, looking. And because it was quiet, I was just looking around, and I looked directly across from me, kitty-corner—of course that's in the corner of the Chamber—kitty-corner from me on the other side, the Republican side, up in the Gallery, I saw these people standing up. And that attracted my attention; the movement up there just attracted my attention. I looked up, and a tall man in a dark suit, he stood up, and he reached inside of his suit, and he pulled out a gun. I was looking right at him when he pulled that gun out.

JOHNSON:

So you saw this before it even started?

GOODWIN:

I saw it before it even started. And he pulled out the gun, and I was looking at him, and I couldn't believe it. He's pulling out a gun! And this is—how many yards across is that? It's nearly 100 yards across there. It's a huge chamber. And I could see it, he had a gun in his hand. And he pulled it out, and he started shooting. He just wasn't aiming at anybody in particular. He was just spraying the place with bullets. The second fella that was with him was in a light blue suit, he stood up, and he pulled out a gun and started shooting, also. And a lot of guys thought it was firecrackers, but I knew it wasn't firecrackers, because I was looking at the guns. And then, a lot of the Members of Congress and everybody else was hitting the floor, and the others did what I did: just stood there with their mouth hanging open. I didn't have sense enough to duck. And I could hear two bullets land right to my right, just above Bill Emerson. Bill Emerson was sitting right to my right, I'd say about eight feet to my right. And a bullet landed in the wall right above his head, about four or five feet above his head. Another bullet landed in the wall over where a bench Page was sitting. I didn't, of course, didn't see the bullets land. I heard them hit.