

Bill Goodwin

First Days as a House Page

Memories of coming to Washington, D.C. and the first few days as a House Page in 1953.

Interview recorded October 20, 2005

Well, I remember not so much the first—I remember the first day, but before that, I remember jumping on the train in Detroit, which was the first time I'd ever been on a train in my life, and I thought that was really an experience. And I came down here. Thinking back, we were poor, and I had an old, beat-up metal suitcase I remember my mother had, and I was instructed to come down here with a blue suit, and a black tie, and a white shirt, and black socks, and shoes, and be equipped that way for the job. So I came down here, and I reported to Mr. Dondero's office; those were my instructions when I got off the train at Union Station—and Mr. Dondero—I left my dead, old, beat-up suitcase, I remember, in his office, and he brought me over to the Capitol building, introduced me to the Doorkeeper of the House, and introduced me to Turner Robertson, and they assigned me to the Democratic side of the House of Representatives. My first day was just meeting the other Pages, and I remember there was a Page who had been here a couple of years. His name was Oliver Furlong, and he kind of took me under his wing. He took me over to a rooming house over on Maryland Avenue, a couple of places, in fact—there was a couple of places—looking for rooms, because in those days, the Pages were just—wherever they could find housing. Rooming houses...A couple of them had apartments, I know. Some of them actually were living with their parents in the area, in the D.C. and Virginia-Maryland area. But those of us who were from out of town, we had to fend for ourselves. And they had rooming houses up and down Maryland Avenue and other streets near the Capitol building. So I located a room, and I had a roommate by the name of Joe Hillings, whose brother was a Member of Congress at the time, and he appointed Joe. We became roommates for the first year, down here on Maryland Avenue: 218 Maryland Avenue. I remember that. Not very far. Within walking distance, within sight of the Capitol building, and within sight of the Supreme Court. I remember that. That was pretty much my first day on the job: just getting acquainted, and they were showing me the ropes around the building—around the Capitol building—what my job was going to be.