

Bill Goodwin

Recollections of the 1954 Shooting in the House Chamber: Part Two

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

Interview recorded November 2, 2009

But the second guy who was shooting- he shot a number of times. I don't remember how much. And then he handed the gun to this woman who was with him who I, up to that point, didn't know she was with him. But she got up and took the gun from that fellow. And she had what I thought was her coat draped over her left arm. She started shooting, and the gun, being an automatic gun, it got away from her. The recoil went up like this. That's how some of the bullets hit the ceiling. Today, those holes are still there, if you know. And then she finished. In the meantime, while she was doing that, that second fellow that gave her the gun was being wrestled to the floor. By this time, the other visitors in the gallery came to their senses as to what was going on, and so they started wrestling this guy, and they wrestled him to the floor. And then she quit shooting and she- I don't know what she did with the gun. She might have dropped it or kept it, but anyhow, she unfurled what I had, up to that point, thought was her overcoat hanging over her arm, but it wasn't. She unfurled- it turned out to be the Puerto Rican flag. These people were Puerto Rican nationalists, I understand. A group of people that wanted to secede from the United States, and they were trying to draw attention to themselves. Well, they did. They drew attention to themselves . in a negative way, of course. So she shouted out something and I learned later that, I think, it was something like, "¡viva la Puerto Rica!" or something like that. She waved the Puerto Rican flag like this and just shook it. Like you would shake a rug, you know. Then she threw it down on the ground and then somebody wrestled her to the floor also. That was it. But in the meantime, while all the shooting was going on, I remember just standing there in the archway, too dumb to drop to the floor and hide, and too surprised. And I could hear those bullets going alongside me. Thud. Thud. Thud. And one of them landed to my right, which is about from here to that wall, about eight feet away from me, where Bill Emerson was sitting in the overseer's chair, the Page overseer. And the bullet landed just above his head by about maybe three, four feet. That bullet landed there.