

Civil Rights

Honoring Ernest Petinaud The Honorable Paul Findley U.S. Representative of Illinois

Representative Paul Findley of Illinois remembers when the House honored longtime House Restaurant employee, Ernest Petinaud.

Interview recorded January 12, 2015

Petinaud himself was thrilled that I suggested he get up in the gallery, a front row seat, when the day arrived that he would retire as maitre d'. He had been employed in the House Restaurant in various capacities, ever since Calvin Coolidge was President. And, when, when I mentioned, as I should not have, that Ernest Petinaud was in the gallery—that's against House Rules to mention that, but I found a way to call attention to him—the entire House turned around and faced Ernie, who was standing in the front row of the gallery, and, and thundered their ovation that lasted, I think for 20 minutes, without a break. And several Members, in commenting about Ernie on the *Record* after that ovation. One of them, I think it was Tip O'Neill, said that he didn't believe there had ever been such an ovation offered to anybody who had ever come to the House Chamber before. And I'm inclined to think that's true. He was a black, he was adored, literally adored, by I think almost every Member of the House, Republican or Democrat, and they were just grieving seriously because they, they knew that this would probably be their last glimpse of him. And they poured out their affection and it filled several pages of the *Congressional Record*. One of the high, high moments of the House, in my experience.