

Mary Ellen (Winter) Atkins
Secretary, Representative Karl Le Compte of Iowa

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“Turn on Your Radios! The President Has Died!”

Mary Ellen Atkins remembers when President Franklin D. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945.
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Well, of course, I remember when Franklin Roosevelt died in Georgia in 1945, I think it was. I was at home at the Scott's Hotel. That was before TVs. We all had the radios in our rooms. I remember hearing the broadcast on my radio that he had died. I remember running all up and down all the halls, “Turn on your radios! Turn on your radios! The President has died!” I notified all the people there. Then I was able to view his cortege, with the flag draped and coffin on a horse-drawn carriage. I think he probably was on his way to the Capitol building for a viewing there. That was very impressive. We were all on the streets, watching that. And then I remember Truman being President after that, of course.