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.
Interview recorded August 24, 2016

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.