

Judy Lemons

Chief of Staff, Representative Nancy Pelosi of California

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“That Wasn’t My Style”

Judy Lemons remembers the culture in the House during the 1970s.

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In those days—I have to be very blunt about this—there was entrenched paternalism and crude sexism. And that—these, these were powerful men and you had Wayne Hays and Elizabeth Ray and that whole scandal about paying his girlfriend to work for him. And then you had Wilbur Mills with Fanne Foxe ending up in the Tidal Basin. And those were—well, Phil wasn’t as close to Wilbur Mills but Wayne Hays was one of his, his close buddies because Wayne Hays, as chair of House administration, controlled the office space, the parking spaces, and a lot of perks that, that Members wanted. And, of course, Phil seemed to have an office in every building, you know, other than his personal office. There was a subcommittee here, it was here, and then the DSG was directly up from our office. And, so, it—I, I did not get on the groupie circuit. That was not my style but there were many, many women who spent every night at the Democratic Club courting favor with these powerful men. That wasn’t my style. I had a life and it wasn’t chasing, chasing after these men who were married and obnoxious in my—after hours—in my view.