



the CAPITOL COURIER

US CAPITOL PAGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

HOMECOMING 2023

Homecoming 2023 – Return to Washington!

BY PETER DARBY, HOUSE, 1983, HOMECOMING CHAIR

After many attempts, our Quadrennial All-Alumni Page Homecoming finally returned on Memorial Day Weekend of 2023, with more than 250 attending. While slightly smaller than our largest attended Homecoming in 2016, we all celebrated an enjoyable return to normalcy.

Three Tributes - Thursday started with a tribute to three extraordinary individuals who were all part of the 1960 Capitol Page School Class Year, where many contributed to Congress later in life. **Ron Lasch** served as a House Republican Cloakroom Manager and eventually Floor Manager for the Republican party in the U.S. House of Representatives. **Donn Anderson**, on the other side of the aisle, also served as a Floor Manager of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1972 to 1987 and elevated to the Clerk of the House from 1987 to 1995. **Jim Kolbe** decided to serve as a Member of Congress and served in the House of Representatives from 1985 until he retired in 2007. The class of 1960 was exceptional in that many former Pages were successful civil servants in the House chamber, where Pages today are currently absent.

Homecoming Kick-off - In the afternoon, attendees were welcomed by President **Jerry**



Jack Thompson (H '61) welcomes his former CPS classmate Rear Admiral James Johnson, MD (Ret.) to Happy Hour at the Hyatt Regency

Papazian (H '72) with an overview of the morning tribute to the class of 1960. Jane Campbell from our partnering U. S. Capitol Historical Society followed and shared stories about creating their Freedom Award in 1993 and how the historical society continues its mission to share the stories behind the history of the U. S. Capitol and the institution of Congress. Keynote Speaker former **Rep. Tom Davis (S '67)** spoke elegantly about his perspec-

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U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association

Founded 2008

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FEATURE

Memorial Made from U.S. Capitol Marble Honors Donnald Anderson in Congressional Cemetery

The U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association has arranged for the placement of a memorial marker made of marble from the U.S. Capitol Building on a plot in the Congressional Cemetery selected by **Donnald K. Anderson (H '60)**, former Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Anderson memorial rests near the cenotaphs established for Members of Congress and others who worked in Washington, D.C.



Anderson died in 2020 and was buried in his hometown of Sacramento, Calif. The marker commemorates Anderson's lifelong service to the U.S. House of Representatives.

A gathering of his friends, colleagues and former Pages was held on Oct. 28, the day after the annual Ken Smith Luncheon in Washington.

Many expressed an interest in making a donation toward the cost of the marker.

If you are interested in doing so, you may do so by mailing a check payable to the USCPAA, PO Box 15112, Washington, DC 20003 or by donating online at www.capitolpagealumni.org/donate/donate-today/. Donations are welcome and are tax deductible to the extent provided by law, as the Association is a 501(c)(3) organization. Please contact Alumni Association President Jerry Papazian at jerrypapazian@gmail.com, if you have any questions.

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tives on the state of our Congress today, which was followed by a tribute to the late **Frank Mitchell (H '65)**, the first African American Page to serve in the House in modern times. The surprise highlight during the tribute was the presence of Toussaint Mitchell, Frank Mitchell's grandson, who spoke about the inspiration of his grandfather. Toussaint currently serves as the Senate Democratic Cloakroom Assistant overseeing Pages serving today.



U.S. Capitol Historical Society Public Historian and Chief Guide Steve Livengood leads a group of former Pages and guests through Statuary Hall

The afternoon continued with a tribute to Hon. **John Dingell (H '42)** with remarks from his spouse, Rep. Debbie Dingell, who shared stories about his life service from being a Page to a long tenure as a Member of Congress. In the closing portion of the Thursday afternoon welcoming program, **Peter Darby (H '83)** welcomed two staff members of the Architect of the Capitol, who shared stories about some of their current and ongoing projects at the U. S. Capitol and across the Hill.

Tours and Presentations - Friday and Saturday kicked off our two busy daytime activities of many tours and gatherings. Tours of the Supreme Court, House Floor and other significant spaces throughout the Capitol were always popular. We also offered a tour of Webster Hall, which, since 1995, has been the home of the Senate Page School and Dormitory. The highlight on Friday was a morning and afternoon session with the House and Senate

Curators in Emerson Hall, the former Capitol Page School and House Page School space in the attic of the Library of Congress. Many in attendance truly enjoyed revisiting their memories of the morning views of the Capitol! Friday ended with a social gathering at the host hotel, Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill, followed by a break-out of Class Dinners throughout Washington, where Pages had a chance to reconnect with many of their classmates.

Saturday started with additional House Chamber Floor Tours. We also hosted a morning session by USCPAA Board Member **Kate Alesse Abbott (H '02)**, to share the progress of the alumni association's efforts in advocating for restoring the Page Program in the U.S. House of Representatives. Highly attended, the takeaway included efforts to connect with members of Congress in our home district offices to share stories about our experience and why it is important to bring back the House Page Program.

Gala Event and Keynote Speaker - Saturday evening, we ended with our Gala Event attended by Pages ranging from the Class of 1950 to 2022 – more than seven decades! We recognized the 50th anniversary of the appointment of the first female House Pages with Felde Looper (H '73) sharing her stories on the historic occasion.

The keynote speaker was **Rear Adm. James Johnson, MD (Ret.)**, introduced by his CPS classmate, **Jack Thompson (H '61)**. Johnson reflected on his journey to Washington, DC, and his experience as a member of the CPS class of 1961. He shared his passionate story about achieving a quality education and why attending the Capitol Page School was paramount. When Johnson came to Washington in January of 1959, he would have been the first African American Page to serve in the House of Representatives in the modern era but was denied entry upon arrival. However, five Members of Congress creatively agreed to hire him to work a day in each of their offices so that he could have a full-time position as an Office Page and be able to attend the Capitol Page School. While he did not have the opportunity to officially serve as a House Page, he was surrounded by his classmates of Pages.

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YOU CAN FIND THE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS FROM THE 2023 ALL-CLASS REUNION THROUGH THE LINKS BELOW

HOMECOMING PHOTOS

Find them at
bit.ly/2023PageHomecoming

TRIBUTE VIDEOS

Hon. Jim Kolbe
<https://vimeo.com/841308154>
Hon. Donald K. Anderson
<https://vimeo.com/841352758>
Ronald Lasch
<https://vimeo.com/842571716>

HOMECOMING VIDEOS

Welcome Event
May 25, 202 - Part I

Welcome, Jerry Papazian;
Hon. Jane Campbell USCHS;
Keynote Opening Speaker,
Hon. Tom Davis;
Tribute to Frank Mitchell,
Tribute to Hon. John Dingell,
Hon. Debbie Dingell
<https://vimeo.com/847153718>

Welcome Event
May 25, 2023 - Part 2

Welcome, Peter Darby; Architect of the
Capitol presentation
<https://vimeo.com/847203779>

Homecoming Gala
May 27, 2023

Introduction and Remarks by
Rear Adm. James Johnson, MD (Ret.)
begins at 19:00 minute mark
<https://vimeo.com/842571716>

IN MEMORIAM

Barrier-Breaking Page, Frank Mitchell, Remembered

BY MICHAEL ESPOSITO, SENATE, 1984

Sad news reached the Alumni Association this year that groundbreaking Page, **Frank Mitchell**, died Dec. 25, 2019, at age 70 in Houston. Mitchell was born in Detroit and grew up in Springfield, Ill. He became part of history when, in the spring of 1965, he



Left to right: Moderator Michael Esposito (S '84), Rep. Paul Findley (R-IL), Frank Mitchell (H '65) and Jerry Papazian (H '72) at 50th Anniversary of Mitchell's appointment in Springfield, IL in 2015

became the first African American to be appointed as a Page in the U.S. House of Representatives in the modern era. His sponsor was U.S. Rep. Paul Findley (R-IL), who died in August 2019 at age 98.

"I didn't realize, certainly, at the time, the magnitude of what they were suggesting," Mitchell said in 2015, recalling when he and other African American teenagers were asked to interview for the appointment at the congressman's Springfield office.

"Any one of them would have done a fine job, I think," Mitchell told attendees of an Alumni Association event with Findley at the Lincoln Presidential in Springfield.

Findley explained how, in 1965, the Republican Party was trying to increase involvement for African Americans in the party and how he worked with future-President Gerald Ford—at the time, House Minority Leader—and suggested the Page come from the city that sent Abraham Lincoln to the White House, Springfield.

"This was in the midst of the Civil Rights movement and very significant events in the nation's history—five weeks after Selma and 'Bloody Sunday,' two months after the assassination of Malcolm X, and I was there when the Voting Rights Bill was passed," Mitchell said.

Mitchell's support for the restoration of the House Page Program, on hiatus since 2011, was well known. He spoke on many occasions of how service as a Page was a gateway to success for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young men and women.

Frank Mitchell and his sponsor, Rep. Paul Findley, appeared at a gathering of the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association in 2015 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield that was broadcast on C-SPAN. A recording is available at www.c-span.org/vid-eo/327649-11. Mitchell also wrote about his experience in an essay posted at www.capitolpagealumni.org.

FEATURE

House-Senate Page Rivalry Went to Court in 1927 and There's a Trophy to Prove It

BY GREGORY HINRICHSEN, SENATE, 1968

During the May 2023 all-classes reunion, Darryl Gonzalez told a little-known story of Page rivalry that even made the news in the Washington Post: The House vs. Senate Page basketball rivalry of 1927.

Although sports at the Page School waxed and waned over the years, this was one of its high points. Gonzalez gave an overview of the history of sports competitions among Pages—with enthusiastic involvement by members of Congress.

Gonzalez was a teacher at the Page School in the Library of Congress from 1999 to 2011 when the school closed. He first learned about the teaching position from an ad in the Washington Post, while living in Buffalo, N.Y. During his tenure, he taught a wide range of subjects from public policy to technology and was

an adviser to the Page School yearbook. His doctoral dissertation in educational policy was on the history of Page program, which later resulted in the book, "The Children Who Ran for Congress: A History of Congressional Pages."

In the course of his research for the book, he became acquainted with **Gus Meade**, who was a member of the famous 1927 basketball game

(and possibly related to Martha Washington). Meade said he had the 1927 trophy, which is inscribed with the names of the winning team. One day, much to his surprise, the trophy arrived in a box at Gonzalez's home. It sits on his mantle, except for an excursion to the Page homecoming for his presentation on sports.

At some point, Gonzalez said he will likely give the trophy to the House historian. Why the House historian?

The House Pages won that 1927 basketball game over the Senate Pages 18 to 12.



House vs Senate Basketball Trophy from 1927



Former House Page School Teacher Darryl Gonzalez presenting his research about the basketball trophy



Pages gather in Emerson Hall, former home of the Capitol Page School and House Page School in the attic of the Library of Congress, to hear presentations from the House and Senate curators

Book Tells of Post-9/11 Classroom Pen Pals

BY MICHAEL ESPOSITO, SENATE, 1984

Julie O'Connor (House, 1991) was a third-grade teacher in New York City when the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, known as "9/11," unfolded. Elaine Mrockza was a third-grade teacher in Illinois, who wanted to find a way her class could "do something" to help children in New York.

As Mrockza said in a TV appearance, adults could donate money, give blood, or contribute in many ways, but few options to show support existed for the 8- and 9-year-old children in her class. She came up with the idea to send letters to a random third-grade class in New York City. A postal worker helped her select a Manhattan ZIP code and off the letters went, addressed to "Any Third-Grade Class."

Chance brought the letters to the students in O'Connor's class, who wrote back. Letters continued back and forth between the classes and between the teachers. The teachers traveled to visit each other's classes—the start of a friendship between the edu-

cators that has lasted more than two decades.

In 2022, it resulted in the book, "United States of Friendship: Pen Pals of 9/11." Their motivation, they said, was to share the positive lessons resulting from this simple act of supporting one another not just with those who remember that day, but especially with the generation who grew up without having lived through that day for whom it is merely history.



"United States of Friendship: Pen Pals of 9/11" by Elaine L. Mrockza and Julie O'Connor, PhD, is available on Amazon, ISBN-13: 978-1639851188.

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During his presentation, he highlighted the importance of bipartisanship that existed during his service as a Page and of civil service. While he was denied the opportunity to be the first African American Page, it did not deter him from continuing his passion to strive for a better education. In time, after attending Oberlin College in Ohio, then Medical School at the University of Rochester in New York and finished his residency at UCLA in California. He joined the US Navy in 1966 with a distinguished career, ultimately becoming a Real Admiral in San Diego.

While Johnson was officially not a House Page, the US Capitol Page Alumni Association awarded him a Lifetime Membership to the U.S. Capitol Alumni Association in debt to his service and what should have been his opportunity to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives truly.

Many came to Washington and enjoyed a Memorial Day weekend with their classmates and other Page friends across decades of service. We hope you enjoy revisiting moments of the Homecoming 2023 weekend, including the tributes, through the photographs and videos provided in the website links. We look forward to everyone returning to our next Homecoming, scheduled for 2027.



Hon. Tom Davis (R-VA) Keynote Speaker at Homecoming Opening



Rear Adm Jim Johnson with former Pages at the Homecoming Gala Dinner



ABOVE: Class of 1981 Dinner hosted by Mary Beth Schultheis (H '81)



LEFT: Three recent Senate Pages in Emerson Hall, overlooking the U.S. Capitol Bldg. – left to right, Caleb Shriver (S '19), John Wahlig (S '19) and Joseph Lesser (S '19)

Online Store Now Live!

At long last, our online store of Page merchandise is live and available at www.capitolpagealumni.org/shop. The store currently features ball caps, water bottles, polo shirts, Save-the-Pages t-shirts and our fast-selling long-sleeve blue Alumni shirt. Also available now are the Democracy's Messengers DVD and the Congressional Page Directory, which includes a list of all known former Pages from 1801 to the present and a written and pictorial history of the House, Senate and Supreme Court Page programs. Current inventory is limited but new Page items will be available periodically. Place your holiday orders now!