



# the CAPITOL COURIER

US CAPITOL PAGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## FEATURES

### Reflections on My Page Service 40 Years Later

BY MATT RUSSELL (SENATE, 1984)

The clerk will call the roll.  
“Mr. Abdnor. Mr. Andrews. Mr. Armstrong...”  
How can it be that this quorum call is as vivid now as it was four decades ago when I served as a U.S. Senate Page in the summer of 1984? What was it about this time spent in polyester navy slacks and starched white shirts that made it such a milestone along my educational journey?

“Mr. Lautenberg. Mr. Laxalt. Mr. Leahy...”

Among the most memorable moments of my time on the Floor was a late night in June when the Senate voted on the National Minimum Drinking Age Act, sponsored by Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J. This bill would require all states to set the minimum age to purchase alcohol at 21, and states that didn't comply would lose a chunk of their federal highway funds. The bill passed by a vote of 81-16. With each “aye” vote that echoed in the chamber (and, again, there were 81 of them), we teenage pages collectively closed our eyes and agonizingly bowed our heads, as if to say, “We were so close.” Today, as an old man of

57 years, I certainly see the wisdom of that legislation.

“Mr. Pryor. Mr. Quayle. Mr. Randolph...”

One afternoon during session, I spotted four senators chatting quietly by the cloakroom door. When the group disbanded, one of its participants, Sen. David Pryor, D-Ark., who also served as a Senate Page in his youth, walked over to the rostrum steps and whispered to us while pointing to where he and his colleagues were huddling. “One day, you'll tell your children that you observed the first unofficial conversation on the Floor of the U.S. Senate about something called the ‘Strategic Defense Initiative’ or ‘Star Wars.’” We had no idea what he was talking about, until shortly thereafter when SDI began to make national news. I ended up sharing that with my children decades later, of course.



Matt Russell, S'84

continued on p. 2

### Ticker Tape Donation – ‘President Reagan Has Been Shot’ – Recalls the Day As It Happened

BY GREGORY HINRICHSEN (SENATE, 1968)

As a teenager, Glenn Huffman (House, 1981) said, “politicians were my heroes” and, at the top of his list, was Ronald Reagan. Appointment as a House Page by Rep. Mickey Edwards in August of 1980 put him in arms-reach of many of these heroes. It was his good fortune that on arrival in the nation's capital, Ronald Reagan had just been nominated as the Republican candidate for President.

That fall, when not working in the House, he and another Page would accompany Reagan and his staff as they left Washington for Dulles airport to hit the campaign trail. They would ride in the press bus and then drive back staff cars of those who departed from the airport. After Reagan's election to

the presidency, Huffman volunteered evenings and weekends to help with the transition team. Among his duties was operating the automated “signature signing machine” on letters that were sent out to Reagan supporters and others.

On March 30, 1981, news began to trickle in that the President had been shot. “There was a huge buzz of conflicting stories about what had happened,” said Huffman. Members were glued to the television in the Republican cloakroom. The atmosphere in the cloakroom was “total shock,” “dazed,” “frightened,” and with much uncertainty about what happened. There was little conversation among Members



Vintage AP Ticker Tape Machine

continued on p. 3

## Inside this issue

- WHIPS CONNECT ALUMNI.....2
- ONLINE STORE .....3
- UPCOMING EVENTS.....3
- PRANKING PRIVILEGES...4
- SUPPORT THE USCPAA...4

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# Reflections

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

*“Mr. Thurmond. Mr. Tower. Mr. Tribble...”*

In the spirit of bipartisanship, Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., would regularly cross the aisle, approach the Democratic Pages, dig into his pocket, pull out a handful of candies, and drop a few into each of our hands. The man who went on to serve in the Senate for nearly 50 years, who still holds the record for delivering the longest speech in Senate history—more than 24 hours—was right to recognize our service with sugar. It was a thing of beauty and was warmly received, despite my parents having raised me to never accept candy from a sitting senator!

These experiences, each with its own valuable lesson, had a significant impact on me, as did signing my name in a large book

kept in a locked cabinet by the snuff box, my signature appearing under the names of those Pages from the past who served during debates over Watergate, the Civil Rights Act, Social Security, two World Wars, Prohibition, and Reconstruction. And conducting Floor tours for VIPs, showcasing the desk that once belonged to Daniel Webster, while running my fingers across Webster’s signature etched on the inside of the drawer.

I’m grateful for these experiences, for my sponsor Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., for the lifelong friends I made that summer, and for the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association for its important work of fostering civic responsibility, enriching the Congressional Page community, and preserving its legacy.



Senate Page Matt Russell with Sen. Jennings Randolph (D-WV)



Matt Russell with 1984 classmates and members of the USCPAA Board of Directors

FEATURE

## Whips Connect Alumni to Events, Programs and Friends

BY DAVE LENOX (HOUSE, 1974)

We are ready to restart our Class Whip Program! Class Whips are volunteers who agree to be the communication link between the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association and the Pages who served with a given “class,” which might be a year, semester, summer, or other period of appointment.

The Whip maintains a list of Page alumni from their class and assists with communication, finding any “missing” class members to update association records, offers guidance for class reunions, and helps alumni learn more about our benefits and activities, such as our joint membership benefit with the

U.S. Capitol Historical Society and regional alumni events.

We expect that Whips will dedicate around five hours per month to this work. The USCPAA will provide the appropriate materials to be sent out, as well as ideas for making the work easier and fun!

If you are interested in learning more about being a Class Whip, reach out to Dave Lenox at [lenoxhouse@verizon.net](mailto:lenoxhouse@verizon.net) to see if your class is still looking for a Whip (or find out who your Whip is!).



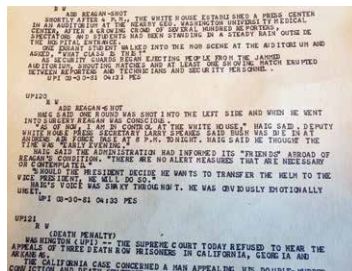
Some of the members of the Class of 1979 at their 45th reunion – Robin Elwell Robertson, Marcie Sims, Judy Bell Mellgard and Don Jepsen at the Hawk N Dove Restaurant in October 2024



Class of 1974 at their 50th year reunion in November 2024 on the steps of the Capitol

# Ticker Tape Donation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Portion of ticker tape quoting Alexander Haig – “As of now, I am in control at the White House”

in the cloakroom as they listened to every word from the television.

In an era prior to 24-hour cable news channels, the internet, and smart phones, teletype machines conveyed “breaking news.” Huffman recalls that there were two teletype machines just outside of the House floor in the Members

Reading Room. The Associated Press and United Press International were the main sources of “wire” information. Information was printed on a continuous scroll of paper.

Initially, information was incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. For example, one wire service reported that press secretary James Brady had been killed, which was not true. (He was seriously wounded in the head.) At the end of that long day, when it was learned that the President would survive, Huffman went to the Members Reading Room and took a piece of the discarded teletype scroll that chronicled the day’s heartbreaking and remarkable events. Huffman said that even now, recounting the events of that day, brings up strong feelings. He also remembered that the Reagan assassination attempt was bookended by the murder of John Lennon in December 1980 and the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in May 1981.

In the following months, Huffman encountered the President twice on his visits to the Capitol and, on one of those visits, shook his hand. After graduation from the U.S. Capitol Page School there was one more encounter with Reagan. Graduating Pages were hosted at a White House reception in May 1981, which was attended by the President. Huffman asked Reagan, “How are you feeling?” to which Reagan responded “Fine.”



President Ronald Reagan with the Class of 1981 CPS graduates – Glenn Huffman – the fourth person to the right of the President

Huffman returned to Oklahoma after completing his service as a Page in June 1981. He obtained a business degree from Oklahoma State University and worked for the federal Comptroller of the Currency as a national bank examiner for 35 years. And whatever happened to that teletype scroll? It sat on a shelf and occasionally he showed it to friends. Last year, he donated it to the U.S. Capitol Page Association.

His thoughts about being a House Page? “Most incredible thing I did outside of getting married and having kids.”

*Postscript: The U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association noted the historical importance of the teletype scroll and notified Farar Elliott, the Curator of the House of Representatives, who acknowledged this would be an important addition to the official collection of the House of Representatives. Huffman signed all the appropriate paperwork to deed the scroll to the U.S. House of Representatives. If you have any Page Memorabilia with which you would like to donate, please contact the US Capitol Page Alumni Association and we will work with you to find the proper home for it. The USCPAA has protocols in place with the House and the Senate for such memorabilia and while the two are very selective in what is added to the official collection, the USCPAA has a growing collection of Page yearbooks, pictures, newsletters, and other memorabilia as part of our Page archive. Please contact us at [alumni@capitolpagealumni.org](mailto:alumni@capitolpagealumni.org) if you have materials you would like to donate.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Stay Tuned | 2025 Events

Updates will appear online as details become available at [www.capitolpagealumni.org](http://www.capitolpagealumni.org).

**Spring 2025**  
New York City  
Reception

**October 17, 2025**  
Annual Ken Smith  
Luncheon (D.C.)

**Summer 2025**  
Washington, D.C.,  
Social

**2027**  
All-Page  
Homecoming

If you're interested in hosting or sponsoring a Page Alumni gathering, please contact the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association, [alumni@capitolpagealumni.org](mailto:alumni@capitolpagealumni.org).



### Show Page Pride in Spiffy Merch!

New items arrived in the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association shop this fall, joining many of our classic offerings. Caps, T-shirts (long- and short-sleeved), water bottles, the “Democracy’s Messengers” DVD, and a newly arrived quarter-zip fleece to keep you cozy through the fall, winter, and spring.

Visit our online shop at [www.capitolpagealumni.org/shop/](http://www.capitolpagealumni.org/shop/)

## FEATURE

## Once Upon a Time, Pages Enjoyed ‘Pranking’ Privileges

BY BEN BARNES (HOUSE, 1965)

When new Pages arrived who were assigned to serve on the Republican side of the aisle of the House of Representatives, the senior Pages liked to pull pranks on the newcomers. We occasionally sent them to nonexistent rooms to pick up something or perhaps sent them to the Document Room to get a “Bill Stretcher” for a Member who wanted to introduce or amend a bill.

We’d tell the Page that in order to submit a bill the Member had to place the original bill on the Stretcher before



*Dome Polish jar, as prescribed by the U.S. Capitol Attending Physician*

being inserted into the hopper on the Speaker’s platform, where all new bills were placed. With straight faces we’d explain that this was important in order to preserve the original bill for historical purposes. The person in the Document Room would laugh and tell the new Page that there was no such thing as a Bill Stretcher and that we were just having fun at his expense.

One of our favorite pranks was to send a Page to get “Dome

Polish.” We told the new Page that Dome Polish was urgently needed by a Member or a Committee post-haste – and off he went to locate some without delay. Stores of Dome Polish were assigned various locations, all requiring a fruitless search. Or so we thought.

Usually, the Page would return embarrassed and everyone would get a good laugh. On one occasion, a Page was dispatched to the Capitol Physician’s office for the Dome Polish, but the prank backfired. Someone in the Physician’s office decided to whip some up. The successful Page returned with a small jar labeled “Dome Polish,” while ruefully informing us that the small jar was all that they could spare that week. We were so surprised that we didn’t know what to say. Then the new Page started laughing and we all joined in. After that, we retired the Dome Polish prank.



*Dome Polish – Apply thinly, let dry. Buff to a high gloss*

## CONTRIBUTE

## Support the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association

Are you a member of the United States Capitol Page Alumni Association? If not, it’s easy to join and offers benefits you will enjoy.

As a member you gain full advantage of benefits the association offers, including exclusive access to our database of 12,000 former Pages. You will want to use this contact information to find former colleagues and network with former Pages who live in your state or city. A feature soon to be added is the ability to find Pages in your profession or who attended the same school. The database is not shared with anyone other than members of the association.

Other member benefits include discounted rates for regional and national events, including upcoming signature and regional events.

The USCPAA offers these tiers of membership:

- Annual member, **\$50**
- Young alumni member (under age 30), **\$25**
- Joint membership with USCPAA and the Capitol Historical Society, **\$75**
- Lifetime membership, **\$500**


To learn more about membership options, visit our website at [www.CapitolPageAlumni.org/Join](http://www.CapitolPageAlumni.org/Join)

### SHARE YOUR NEWS

The association depends on you for news about you! Do you have a new job, new promotion, new political victory? Do you have memories from your Page service you’d like to share – memorable legislation or funny or inspirational encounters with Members?

Send us your news and memories to [www.CapitolPageAlumni.org](http://www.CapitolPageAlumni.org) and we will see that it is shared with our broader Page community.

### “LIKE” US ON FACEBOOK

 The Association has been hard at work growing our presence on Facebook. Have you had a chance to check us out yet? Be sure to “like” our official page – Capitol Page Alumni Association – to stay up to date on all the happenings of the Association. You can see upcoming events, learn about opportunities to help the Association grow, and see stories from past Pages. This Facebook page is a terrific way to connect and interact with alumni from around the country – and even the world.

#### Join the discussion today!

Click on the Facebook icon on our website or go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Capitol-Page-Alumni-Association/193020031458>