



the CAPITOL COURIER

U S C A P I T O L P A G E A L U M N I A S S O C I A T I O N

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U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association

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FEATURE

USCPAA Commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the Appointment of the First Female Pages

Plaque Dedication: The morning started with a program sponsored by the current Senate Pages – inviting the original female Senate Pages and the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association – to dedicate a plaque provided by the alumni association to hang in Webster Hall that commemorates the 50th anniversary of the appointment of the first female Senate Pages. The program, held in the Hart Senate Office Building, included all 30 current Senate Pages, the Senate school faculty and others from the Senator Curator's office. The program featured former **Sen. Fred Harris**, one of the original sponsors, along with **Paulette Desell-Lund** and **Julie Price**. The brother and sons of Ellen McConnell Blakeman, who died in 2018, also attended.

50th Anniversary Program and Panels:

The program continued at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill with a lunch, speakers and panels. **USCPAA Historian Jim Oliver** (House 1968) provided some historical background of earlier attempts of women to become Pages, highlighting the story of Gene Cox, the daughter of a Member of Congress, who served as a Page in the House for a few hours in 1939. Of the original three Senate sponsors, Sharon Percy Rockefeller was unable to join us in person to represent her father **Sen. Charles Percy**, but **Joshua Javits**, son of **Sen. Jacob Javits**, spoke in person about his father and the historic appointment. Our keynote speaker was

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FEATURE

How a Senate Republican Page Became Friends with a Future Democratic President

BY JOSEPH SETTING II (SENATE 1983)

Appointed by U.S. Sen. William V. Roth Jr. of Delaware in 1983, I attended my junior year of high school at the U.S. Capitol Page School in the Library of Congress. I started my term as a Republican Senate Floor Page, then served as a Republican Cloakroom Page, and ended my term as the Head Republican Floor Page. This service truly showed me the workings of the U.S. Senate, not only on the Senate floor and in the cloakroom, but also behind the scenes and throughout the Capitol.

In that time of bipartisanship, Ronald Reagan was president and George H.W. Bush was vice president. Thomas "Tip" O'Neill was Speaker of the House, while in the Senate, Sen. Howard Baker was the Majority Leader and Sen. Robert Byrd was the Minority Leader. Sen. Strom Thurmond was President Pro Tempore. Other icons serving in the Senate included Sens. Robert Dole, John McCain and Barry Goldwater on the Republican side of the aisle, and on the Democratic side, Sens. John Glenn, Ted Kennedy and, of course, Joe Biden.

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SAVE THE DATES 2022-ish Alumni Homecoming

Tentative dates for the all-classes quadrennial Alumni Homecoming (originally planned for 2020) are now May 25-29, 2022, with activities expected to center on the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. The Alumni Association's Executive Board is monitoring ongoing pandemic and Capitol-security issues that may affect tour and program access and availability. Visit CapitolPageAlumni.org/Events online for updates on this and other planned Alumni Association events.

FEATURE

USCPAA Commemorates 50th Anniversary of First Female Pages

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sen. Fred Harris, who shared many stories about his time in the Senate and his runs for President of the United States in 1972 and 1976.

Message from Sen. Amy Klobuchar: Following Senator Harris's remarks we were honored to receive a message from Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who addressed both the current Senate Pages in attendance, as well as the importance of this anniversary celebration. She mentioned efforts she and other Senators have made to include the names of female Senators and Members of Congress on rooms in the U.S. Capitol.

Panel of "Firsts": Jane Campbell, President of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, moderated a panel of the first female pages in the Senate, Supreme Court and House. The panelists included **Paulette Desell-Lund** (Senate 1971), **Deborah Gelin** (Supreme Court 1973), **Charlotte King** (House 1973-first female African American House Page), **Felda Looper** (House 1973) and **Julie Price** (Senate 1971). A video of **Ellen McConnell Blakeman** (Senate 1971) speaking at the 2012 Homecoming panel about her efforts to become a Senate Page, kicked off the panel. Participants participated via Zoom and the panel fielded questions from the audience.

Message from Rep. Abigail Spanberger (Senate 1996).

Panel of Female Pages through the Decades: Kathryn Weeden, former Principal of Senate Page School, moderated a panel of former female pages representing various decades, including **Camilla Messing Bosanquet** (House 1991), **Robin Buckley** (House 1980), **Lisa Garrett** (Senate 1975), **Sarah Lanford** (Senate 2013) and **Cynthia Yue** (Senate



50th Anniversary Plaque now hangs in U.S. Senate Page School in Webster Hall.

2017). Participants participated via Zoom and the panel fielded questions from the audience.

Videos of the following are available on the USCPAA website: www.CapitolPageAlumni.org

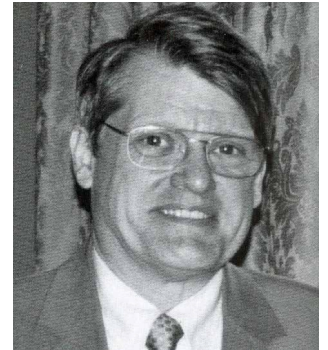
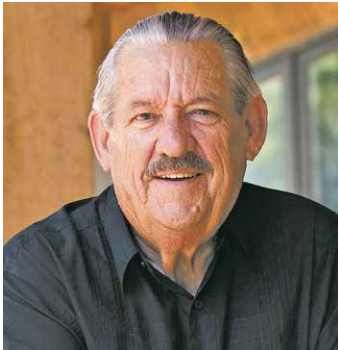
- Zoom Recording of 50th Anniversary Program
- Message from Sen. Amy Klobuchar
- A video of Ellen McConnell Blakeman (Senate 1971) speaking at the 2012 Homecoming panel about her efforts to become a Senate Page—video courtesy of C-SPAN
- Message from Rep. Abigail Spanberger (Senate 1996)



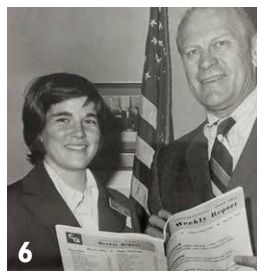
Presentation of the Plaque: from left – Brenten Blakeman, Paulette Desell-Lund, Douglas McConnell, Jerry Papazian, Julie Price, Bennett Blakeman and Senator Fred Harris (Brenten and Bennett Blakeman and Douglas McConnell are the sons and brother, respectively, of Ellen McConnell Blakeman, who passed away in 2018).



Some of the Senate, House and Supreme Court Pages who served in the early 1970s, in attendance at the 50th Anniversary program at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in October.



Left to right: Senator Fred Harris; Jane Campbell, President, US Capitol Historical Society; Kathryn Weeden, former Principal of U.S. Senate Page School; Jim Oliver, USCPAA Historian



Starting from upper left:
 1. Ellen McConnell and Paulette Desell, with Senator Charles Percy
 2. Julie Price being sworn in
 3. 1971 Female Senate Pages: Mary Iwashita, Barbara Wheeler, Ellen McConnell and Paulette Desell
 4. Charlotte King, with her sponsor Rep. William Clay
 5. Supreme Court Page Deborah Gelin
 6. Kathy Draper with her sponsor Rep. Gerald R. Ford
 7. Felda Loooper with her sponsor Speaker Carl Albert

FEATURE

A "Pathbreaker's" Journey Begins at the Capitol Chapel

BY BARBARA WHEELER HINES (SENATE 1971)

My Page journey began in August 1971 during a visit to the Capitol Chapel with my mother and her sisters. On the front pew sat an engaging young kid in a Page uniform and a big 1970s Afro who introduced himself as Gerry Hardin, Sen. Ted Kennedy's Page. He asked me where I was from—Oklahoma—and if I wanted to be a Page, because Sen. Fred Harris was looking for one. I loved the idea and knew my dad, who passed away the previous year, would be proud.

Gerry asked me if I was a good student—yes—and offered to call Sen. Harris's office for an interview later that day. Greeted like an old friend, Sen. Harris kindly asked me about my interests, grades, Oklahoma, church, my military pilot dad (who had flown him around Oklahoma on campaign stops) and, importantly, if I had a car and could independently drive to work and home at night in the dark. Mom said she would take responsibility for my security, while he assured her of a parking spot close to the entrance. He said he would be in touch, if I was successful.

Months later, after I had enrolled in 11th grade in Arlington, living in a new big city with a new family, no plans, ready for an adventure, and in need of some really good news, I was summoned from government class to the counselor's office. I was surprised to see my mom standing there beaming with pride, "You are going to be the next girl Page!" It was the happiest day of my life!

Starting on Nov. 11, 1971, my six-week patronage as the fifth female page occurred during an eventful time in D.C. The Equal Rights Amendment had passed in the House in October and rallies were growing in force before ERA passed in the Senate in March '72. It had been six months since the first girls were appointed and my replacement of Sen. Harris's first female Page occurred during this time of intense interest.

The first day started typically—up early, drove in, sworn in, payroll, introduced to managers, teased by the boys with a friendly bit of introductory hazing and shown the ropes by the other female Democratic Page, Mari Iwashita. The first time Mari and I entered the cloakroom, however, Sen. Warren Magnuson was clearly uncomfortable having TWO girls nearby while he awkwardly tucked in his shirt and curbed his swearing. The next we heard we were barred from the cloakroom and from doing our jobs. A sisterhood developed quickly, when Mari called a strategy meeting of the girls, who were supportive, so Mari called the press to complain.



Barbara Wheeler Hines

The publication of our story in The Washington Post on Friday sent Senate feathers flying. Sen. Magnuson was incensed, gallery visitors pointed at us all day and reporters followed us for comment—what an initiation! We were re-admitted to the cloakroom on Monday!

Our infamy continued on Tuesday, when the girls were instructed to go to the Capitol steps where we were surprised to see a pool of photographers urging us to stand together for a picture and subsequent interview. A photo of the four of us hit national newspaper front pages on Nov. 17, and the picture and story appeared in the World Book Encyclopedia 1972 Annual Edition. The boys teased us as picture hounds and asked for our autographs.

The first month I was full of awe for this small-town girl, meeting famous Senators and wonderful staff, learning about government, helping Sen. Harris, exploring the nooks and beauty of the Capitol, working full-time for the first time in a very interesting job and earning money. I attended Capitol Page School on the top floor of the Library of Congress. December was so busy, we barely went to school before working long, albeit exciting and challenging, days in the company of our special cadre of smart, funny and precocious teenagers from across the country. I was aware and grateful every day for the privilege and special access of my role, and felt an enormous sense of responsibility to do it well, especially determined to mitigate the stigma of women being less capable than male counterparts.

There wasn't much difference between the work of boy and girl Pages, other than most Senators calling the girls "sweetie" or "honey" and not being allowed to carry heavy items such as chairs, a podium or loaded trolley. The advantages were the same, like Senators inviting Pages to parties at their homes and, in my case, collecting pictures of Senators to get autographed as a wedding gift for my mom and stepfather, who wed Dec. 3. Also, a big group of us traveled to New York, where we met then-UN Ambassador George H.W. Bush.

The last day before Christmas break, the Pages assembled on cloakroom couches to eat from the "slop shop" and watch TV like one big happy family. I had made friends with many different people: Pages, staff, police, elevator operators, cloakroom attendants, as well as Senators. One of the cloakroom attendants was a photographer who noticed that the cherry blossoms were blooming, so asked me outside to get a photo, which was published on the front page of the Washington papers Dec. 17.

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FEATURE

Following the 'Firsts': Arriving as a Senate Page in 1972

BY ATLEE VALENTINE POPE (SENATE 1972)

After several minutes of scrolling for news updates on The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal apps, I shut my iPad, adjusted my mask, closed my eyes, and sat back in the uncomfortable airport lounge seat to wait for my flight home. I was exhausted after spending two days in D.C. with friends and other former Pages celebrating the 50th anniversary of the appointment of the first female Pages. This event was especially meaningful to me. Almost 50 years ago to the date, in October 1971, I was interviewed by Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr.'s legislative aide, and at the conclusion of the interview I was amazed and thrilled to hear that the Senator had already decided to appoint me to be Tennessee's first female Page beginning in January 1972. Looking back now, after 50 years, my appointment was a major building block along my journey toward achieving female empowerment and inclusion. This early experience profoundly shaped the direction of my career and my life.

How did this happen? In those days there were no online applications, mobile phones, PCs or even internet. I had appealed to Sen. Baker via a handwritten letter sent with my short resume, because earlier that year I had seen a Seventeen magazine article about the first three girl Pages—Paulette Desell (later Desell-Lund), Julie Price and Ellen McConnell (later Blakeman). The accompanying pictures showed three confident teenagers dressed in the latest 1970s fashion, ready to upend the status quo. Four years earlier, during a school field trip to the U.S. Capitol, our tour guide explained that only boys could become Pages. Although at that time there was no doubt that power was held by and belonged to older white adult men, I was nevertheless enraged. Wait a minute, I thought back then, these boys who have become Pages are just like me—we equally attend school, play sports and speak our minds. So, when I happened upon the Seventeen article, I immediately became enthralled with these three gals who had pulled off the seemingly impossible. I read each word of that article, wanting to know who they were, and what they were like. With my mother's encouragement I began to think, if they can get a Page appointment, why can't I?

When I arrived in January 1972, Paulette, Julie and Ellen were already serving as Pages; 99 boys and these three girls were attending Capitol Page School. As a military kid who changed schools regularly—this would be my seventh—I had learned how to slowly blend into new situations unobserved. However, given the overwhelming imbalance of male to female mix at the Capitol Page School, I quickly realized that as a new



Atlee Valentine Pope

female I could hardly enter unnoticed. I stood out and felt uncomfortable. To my great relief, I was told that one of the girls, Ellen, was to show me the ropes. Ellen had been appointed by Sen. Charles H. Percy, and I was slated to join her on the Republican side of the aisle. Ellen took this assignment seriously, and in her no-nonsense, short-quoted manner, she quickly made it abundantly clear to me that I had to uphold the critically important, unspoken social compact—after their hard-fought battle, the presence and acceptance of female Pages on the U.S. Senate floor, in and around the Capitol, and amongst our male peers was not to be undermined, overturned or doubted. In other words, Ellen firmly communicated, not through words, but instead through example, that I was not to screw this up by displaying ditzy, airhead, boy-crazy behavior.

Early on I closely followed Ellen. I would watch her, with her head up and back straight, walk proudly in her navy-blue suit along the back of the Senate chamber. She knew all eyes in the gallery and Senate floor were on her. She would be pointed out as one of the first female Pages, and she was determined to reflect female empowerment by exhibiting exquisite mannerisms and high standards. I quickly figured this out and endeavored to change my careless guise; I stopped slouching, stood up straight and began to imitate Ellen.

During those early weeks, I was genuinely terrified of Ellen, and when the opportunity arose, I glued myself to Paulette, who also served on the Republican side, because of her appointment by Sen. Jacob K. Javits. Though soft-spoken and gentle, Paulette turned out to be just as firm in her mentoring as Ellen. One morning, I fell asleep on a soft leather couch to the soothing sound of the tickertape newsreel in the background. Before long, Paulette sat down next to me, jabbed me in the ribs with her elbow and said in a tough, sharp tone, "wake up," as Vice President Spiro Agnew walked in front of us on his way to preside over the opening of the Senate session.

Later, when I was told to memorize the names, states and faces of every Republican Senator, I shrugged it off, thinking these photos were useless because they were out of date and highly misleading. Besides Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, all other 44 photos were of old white men who frankly all looked alike to me. Ridiculous, I thought, but Paulette was insistent. She would grill me using the photos like flash cards, and it seemed an impossible task. Back then, only a very few Senators were seen on TV or photographed in the Washington papers, so many of these 44 faces were unfamiliar to me. I continued to

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Atlee Valentine Pope with Senator Fred Harris

FEATURE

Following the 'Firsts'

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laugh off this absurd test until the first time I was present on the floor during a vote.

As Senators began to arrive, one of the three cloakroom managers, Howard Greene, buzzed for a Page. It was my turn to scramble up from the steps, find my way through the throng of Senators mulling around their desks and enter the cloakroom. Greene quickly handed me a pink phone message slip with a phone number on it and said, "go find Sen. [J. Caleb] Boggs and tell him President [Richard] Nixon wants him to call him back." I nodded affirmatively, turned on my heels, rushed back to the floor and started looking for Sen. Boggs. Of course, I wasn't quite sure if I could find Sen. Boggs, as during my photo drills with Paulette I constantly mixed up Sen. Boggs with Sen. James Pearson. The clock was ticking, the vote was imminent, and I had to move forward and take a chance. When I marched up to Sen. Pearson, handed him the pink slip, and told him that the President wanted to speak with him, he beamed and rushed off to the cloakroom. It was only a few minutes later when Sen. Pearson came back red-faced announcing to me that I had been sorely mistaken. Fortunately, Paulette was sitting next to me, and heard the confrontation. After my heart stopped pounding, I explained to Paulette what had happened and without a word she immediately shot up from the steps, found Sen. Boggs and informed him of President Nixon's request. I had never been so embarrassed. To her credit, Paulette never berated me, she only sighed. Believe you me, from that point on I indeed found a way to memorize those Senator names and faces.

As time went on, I ultimately found my footing. Paulette and Ellen each continued to keep an eye out for me; and as my comfort zone expanded, I came to know Pages from the "other side of the aisle" including Julie. Our days and evenings filled up as all 100+ of us on the Hill witnessed democracy in the making. But we all also managed to find the time and energy to collectively visit local drinking and dining establishments, cheer on our underperforming basketball team, and adventure out of town on chaperoned (and unchaperoned) field trips. Like many Pages who have had the honor of serving before us, and since, we bonded together.

That bond has continued over the last 50 years. While we have been geographically disbursed, Julie, Paulette, Ellen and I have intermittently stayed in touch and remained friends. Ellen forged a career in public relations and would join the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association board in 2012. She continued to be a force of nature until her death in 2018.

Recently, during the COVID-19 shutdown, I caught up with Julie and Paulette and since then we have instituted regular Zoom cocktail check-ins. While our virtual calls cover a wide

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50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST FEMALE PAGES

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Kelly Shea Hitchcock (House '01)
Byron R. Wadley, MD (House '74)
LaTonya Wesley Ward (House '90)

FEATURE

A GOP Page Became Friends with a Future Democratic President

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Whether on the Senate floor or behind-the-scenes, Sens. Baker and Dole worked with Sen. Byrd and other Democratic Senators who were passionate about certain issues. I witnessed firsthand compromises that were made to get legislation passed. The debates and conversations were civil and the two sides much respected each other. After any vote, whether or not they favored the result, the Senators continued cordial communication and off they went to bipartisan events.

Another sign of that bipartisanship is the friendship I began with then-Sen. Biden. He often offered me a ride home to Delaware (when he was not taking Amtrak). His son, Beau, and I became good friends. Beau later became Delaware's attorney general, but unfortunately passed away from brain cancer. Beau, his dad and I would talk politics sometimes, but more frequently we discussed real estate, construction and historic renovations, a passion for all three of us.

After graduating from University of Delaware with a degree in political science, instead of going to law school and running for elective office, I formed a real estate development company named Setting Properties. I am also a minority owner of the Washington Nationals-affiliated Wilmington Blue Rocks and stay active in politics in the state of Delaware.

My wife, Judy, and our son, Jay, live in Greenville, Del., a short distance from the President's Delaware home, our other home in Rehoboth Beach is a few blocks from the President's beach home.

Each time we see the President in church, he is welcoming to all in his frequent attendance, practicing his faith that has sustained him through many hardships.



FEATURE

A Pathmaker's Journey

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The Senate Historian described the girls as “pathbreakers,” the first year of female Pages’ admission to the Senate floor! For me, it was a memorable, cherished and super-eventful, six-week experience that informed and propelled my career.

Barbara Wheeler Hines went on to work in public relations for the House of Representatives, graduate from the University of Maryland, attend The Johns Hopkins University, and become an appointee in the White House, Pentagon and U.S. Embassy in Vienna. Travel led to New Zealand and Australia, where she now works and lives with her husband and two sons.



Fall 2021 Senate Pages at Plaque Dedication

CONTRIBUTE

It's Easy to Become a Member of 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

FEATURE

Following the 'Firsts'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

range of topics—from family to careers to politics—when our conversation drifts back to our Page days, I continue to be amazed at what these two friends lived through as “Firsts.”

I was reminded of this again during our hours-long conversations about this year's Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. Paulette and Julie each carefully reminded me of certain Capitol layout details, and once again I found myself happily following their lead on recalling the intricate workings of Congress in the Capitol setting that together we experienced back in the early 1970s.

Remember the U.S. Capitol Page Alumni Association


Your continuing support is needed now more than ever! Please consider including the USCPAA in your estate planning to ensure that the Page experience can continue and expand for generations to come. Talk to us about your estate planning today about the many ways you can help the USCPAA and its programs to support the Page program. We will work with you and your advisors to find the best plan for you. Call us at 310-378-1410 or email us at Alumni@CapitolPageAlumni.org and we will respond quickly. Thank you.

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 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>