

JULIE PRICE
Senator Fred Harris' First Female Page, 1971-72
December 5, 2012

KATE SCOTT: Welcome, Julie. Thank you for coming down here from Pennsylvania to talk with us about your experience as a page in 1971. Maybe you can start off by telling us how you got interested in the Senate page program.

JULIE PRICE: I was sitting in my desk [in civics class] in about 8th grade, give or take a year, middle school, basically, which we called junior high. I must have been bored, I think everyone was heading out to lunch. It was a hot, boring day. I was flipping through my civics book and I saw a picture of these guys in blue suits that looked about my age. I read about them. They were pages. Their ages were the same as my age, in the same range, and they worked in the Senate or maybe in the House, I'm not sure. It just went bing! What a great job! I was interested in politics. It was the '60s. I had my eye on these passionate politicians, like Bobby Kennedy [R-NY], for example. The wave of the '60s movements, I was fascinated by, even though I was in Oklahoma. I thought, I can do that and that's what I want to do. That's how I got interested.

SCOTT: You said you were political. Were your parents political? Did you come from a political family?

PRICE: My family was always political, especially my father. At the University of Oklahoma, I think he met Fred Harris [D-OK] there. I think they were students there together. He introduced me in Bartlesville to different politicians when they came through town. My congressman was Ed Edmondson. By that time I had been doing some work on political campaigns, just knocking on doors and stuffing envelopes and doing what I was told to do, really.

SCOTT: For the congressman?

PRICE: And going to rallies. For the Democratic Party, the local Democratic Party, which my dad was involved in. We were in a very Republican area and so it became a fun rivalry. It wasn't like it is today. We were all friends with each other. We went to school together, the adults worked together. Election time was a fun rivalry. We were in the minority. I would go sometimes with my Dad to rallies and meet candidates. That's how I met Ed Edmondson and Fred Harris. Ed Edmondson was more accessible because he was our congressman. The next rally I went to I approached him and said I knew what I wanted to do, that I wanted to be a page. How do I do that? He said that's a

great idea, but you know you can't do it. Girls aren't allowed. I was stunned. It made no sense to me, of course. I had three sisters and two brothers and we lived on a farm and I knew I could do anything my brothers could do. I was surprised that that would be the reception. I don't know if I thought about it and the next time I saw him I asked him again. After giving it some thought, I'm sure I said something like, "What should I do to change things so that girls can be pages?" As if there was some simple change that could be made. It was so obvious to me that the rule made no sense, I thought that once pointed out, others [in Congress] would see my point; as if it had been a mistake or oversight in the first place. But at some point I said, "Is there anything we can do to change that? What could be done?" Or maybe he said, "Here's what you can do." [cell phone ringing]

That's my son texting. I'm sorry.

SCOTT: That's okay.

PRICE: Let me turn that off.

SCOTT: So maybe the next time you saw him you said, "Is there anything we can do?"

PRICE: I didn't take that as the final word. [I said, "So what do I do now? Is there something that can be done to change the policy/rules?"] He said, "You could write a petition." I was like, "How do you do that? What's a petition?" [both laugh] "And how do you write one?" He told me. I had a good friend who was also political and her dad was an attorney. We came up with this wording and her dad put it in legal form for us. "We the undersigned agree that girls should be—" To this day I wonder where that petition is. We brought it to Capitol Hill.

SCOTT: Maybe it's in some senator's or committee's papers?

PRICE: Maybe.

SCOTT: You brought it to Capitol Hill?

PRICE: In our hands. We delivered it. It had 300-500 signatures. We thought that was a lot of signatures for Bartlesville, Oklahoma. It was our teachers and our parents and our friends, everyone.

SCOTT: Did your parents come out here with you to deliver the petition?

PRICE: I came a couple of times. Once I came with a group called the Young Dems. We came with our leader who was a Democratic, maybe committeewoman, an officeholder, locally. My parents were not on that trip. There was a group of maybe six of us. I do have some pictures of that trip, I can bring them. We came and one of our goals was to go and see—I think we saw Ed Edmondson and maybe Fred Harris on that trip. At some point, I believe they kept it in Washington on that trip, I don't think we went home with it. Xeroxing wasn't so easy in those days. We made a few copies to go around and we probably handed them all in, like homework, you know? We discussed the possibility of girls being pages and they were all very happy to meet with us and talk with us. That was that. We never heard anything. That was in junior high. Then later, when I was a sophomore in high school I didn't really expect anything to come of it. I went off to boarding school. I was antsy, you see. I went off to boarding school in Massachusetts and that's where I was when they called me, when I was a junior.

SCOTT: You went years without hearing anything? And they found you in Massachusetts? They presumably called your parents, I suppose.

PRICE: [Before they found me] my boarding school also took a school trip to Washington. On that trip I also made my rounds to Harris' office and to Edmondson's office to see what was going on with my petition. Again, they met with me. I didn't have my [Oklahoma] friends with me then.

SCOTT: The members?

PRICE: I have pictures of me with Fred Harris from that trip, I'm pretty sure it's Fred Harris. [Actually it is Ed Edmondson] Yes. I was a boarding school kid at that point with braces. We were going over, looking over some papers. It was the same kind of meeting. "It's a good idea, we think it's great that you did this," but then I never heard anything. Until I got a call on the pay phone in December of 1970. They said—I think it was Senator Harris' legislative aide, Ed Monroe, who I had met before, who called and said, "Senator Harris is thinking of appointing a girl as a page." He gave me a little background. He said, "Senators [Charles] Percy [R-IL] and [Jacob] Javits [R-NY] are planning to do the same thing. We're wondering if you are still interested?" It came from left field because I hadn't heard anything in ages. I said, "Yes!" I was not going to continue at boarding school. I was going back to Oklahoma. I was like, "I guess I can just change everything around." I didn't say that, that's what I was thinking, because it wasn't at that point part of my plan.

SCOTT: What was the timeline? Did they give you a sense for when they wanted you to come?

PRICE: I think the idea was that I start my next semester of school at the page school. They were going to nominate me as soon as they got my consent. At the same time Paulette [Desell Lund] and Ellen [McConnell Blakeman] were going through this nomination process, it wasn't really a process. They were being nominated. We were told "Whoa. You can't come yet." We really went from January to May, it was a "hurry up and wait, hurry up and wait."

SCOTT: So you went back to Oklahoma?

PRICE: I went back to Oklahoma and resumed high school in Oklahoma. I came to D.C. for a press conference once. They kept saying, "You have to come and do this." My parents would hustle around and we would get here and then it would still not be time to start.

SCOTT: And you would go back.

PRICE: And I would go back. That's when there was a lot of press because the Senate Rules Committee was meeting and debating it. It didn't look good for a while.

SCOTT: How much information were you getting? Were you getting the information from Ed Monroe to give you the background of what was happening? Was it more silent on that side?

PRICE: I was getting information. I'm trying to remember if he called me directly or if maybe my parents were contacted and told, "It looks like we are not going to start in February." It would always be, "Not January, maybe February." Or, "Maybe two more weeks, we have to meet with some other people." And then it would be "maybe two more weeks." Then they finally set a date for a significant Rules Committee meeting, which I could not attend but Paulette and Ellen I think attended. There was a time when it looked like it wasn't going to happen, which I don't remember too clearly. But there are lots of articles that say, "Oklahoma girl remains optimistic in spite of Senate actions." Things like that, which I did. They must have contacted my parents because they are the ones who said, "We're not going, not yet. Not next week." Finally it was, "Okay, time to come." They passed it and it went through.

SCOTT: What I have here is a sequence of events. The report comes out of the Rules Committee basically approving the appointment of female pages on May 10. On May 14 that's when Paulette and Ellen—

PRICE: Paulette and Ellen were sworn in on the 14th and I the following Monday.

SCOTT: And that's because you had to get here from Oklahoma.

PRICE: They were both here in D.C. I think that was probably my last day of school, that Friday. I think I finished. Otherwise I would have had to come and then go back again. I think I finished school and then came. Ellen, who was already here, had to go back and finish some things up with her school.

SCOTT: It looks like she literally served one day and then came back in June.

PRICE: I've talked to her about this. We all were juggling the lives of high schoolers. We couldn't just drop it or else we would have to repeat. She had to go back and tie up whatever loose ends she had with her school. I'm pretty sure it was her school. I was able to finish because in Oklahoma we don't go too far into June because of the heat.

I finished and came. What I don't remember is if I went to page school at all during that first stretch. I don't know when page school—I think it gets out in June. I may have gone for a few days because I felt very familiar with it when I came back the next January. I may have gone for a few days with all the pages during my first stint but I would really have to check the records to see. [I did check the records and saw that I attended CPS from the day I arrived to the last day of school for CPS in June.]

SCOTT: The article from the *New York Times* that you passed along to me, May 29, 1971, both you and Ellen speak to the reporter about your experience at the page school, so it looks like you've been going for a little bit.

PRICE: Ellen is back by then, right? Did we talk about the school?

SCOTT: I think so, yes.

PRICE: Ellen went to the school while she was working in Percy's office. But they wouldn't let her serve as a page.

SCOTT: That's right, I saw that she had an appointment in the personal office.

PRICE: Yes, they would not swear her in.

SCOTT: What did you parents think about all this, especially the start and stop? The idea that you would be one of the first female pages, what did they think about it?

PRICE: They were supportive in the way that they got it together. I had five siblings. They got it together to get me back and forth like that and do whatever it took. I think because their lives were also very busy, it's not like they talked to me a lot about it, like how great it was. They were used to it because I had been working on this for a while. I think in a way they were surprised that it was really happening, too. They might have thought, well, like we were saying, everybody has dreams. The governor of Virginia and Senate page. [We were talking about how one of the pages dreamed of becoming governor of Virginia.] But I'm not sure they fully anticipated it would become a reality, either. They weren't talking it up like I had won an Olympic gold medal, or anything. It was kind of routine because I had been thinking about for a while, but also was kind of a surprise. My dad at one point said that he had started introducing himself as Julie Price's dad. [both laugh]

SCOTT: How did your community respond?

PRICE: It was wild. It was wild for me, too, because I was one of six kids and not necessarily accustomed to being the center of attention in any way. All of a sudden I had a lot of press calling me. A TV crew followed me to school, came into my classroom at school. I just did it because it all happened. They came to my house and interviewed me at my house, indoors [and] outdoors. [We] walked around. I think I did it because it was just part of it. In the long run, I think I'm a little photo sensitive as an adult. I understand why children need to be shielded from a lot of press and publicity. Some of it may relate back to that. After a while—and I think the other girls felt this way, too—even when we were pages we would get called from the Senate floor because somebody wanted to interview us. We would kind of look at each other and Patrick Hynes would say, “You don't have to say yes.” He was our boss. We did it because we enjoyed it. On the other hand, I think it was the feeling of being exposed.

SCOTT: In the fishbowl all the time.

PRICE: As an adult I'm not real quick to jump in front of a camera. I'm a little like, “Put that camera down.” Even though I want pictures, too, for when I'm older, of me in them but I still have this reflexive, “Put it down.” We would take the subways back and forth and there would be photographers. It was a short period of time but it was intense. I don't know, I've got to ask my siblings eventually how they saw it. I was, like I said, not used to being the center of attention. I was not the most sparkling of my siblings.

I was an awkward adolescent early on. It was the turn when all of the sudden I was in the limelight for a while.

SCOTT: I could see how that would be very hard to negotiate at that age. It's a difficult age anyway, so that just makes it more complicated.

PRICE: It was a whirlwind, is one way to describe it. I kept trying to live day to day. I had this boyfriend and I had my schoolwork. I know that I felt like I had to be aware. I had to be aware, I had to be good. Teenagers are doing stuff. I had to pass on a lot because I was like, if somebody finds out, that's going to be in the papers. I don't know where I got that from, but I can't do that guys because I'll lose my job!

SCOTT: I know that the Senate debated this resolution to appoint female pages for some time. I know that there was some opposition from some members who voiced a number of concerns, one of them being that this was, at the time, a crime-ridden section of Washington, D.C. And Washington, D.C., was a crime-ridden city. Some senators voiced concern about the safety of the female pages. Others voiced concern about where would the females reside? They didn't seem to be concerned with where the male pages stayed, but the females posed different problem for them. Those particular concerns, I think, were addressed in the final resolution, which forced each member who supported a female page to find them a place to stay and basically to be a sort of father to the female pages in a way the male pages did not have the same relationship with their sponsoring member.

PRICE: In a way it was impossible.

SCOTT: Right. What did you know about those requirements and how did you negotiate those requirements when you arrived here? Where did you live, for example, and how did you find a place to live?

PRICE: I did not find it. I was told that I would live at the Young Women's Christian Home, I think, which I just drove by. I'm sure it's still there but it has a different name. It was a place where a lot of government employees, a lot of young women, lived. It was all for women. You had rooms. I don't know if they were double rooms. I had my own room, washer/dryer. No, not in the room, on the floor. A Laundromat on the floor and a dining hall on the first floor. That's where I lived, which I was used to because I had been in boarding school.

SCOTT: I was going to say that it sounds like an all women boarding house.

PRICE: It was. I was the youngest. I'm sure the pages were the youngest ones there. Most of the women were 18 and older, out of high school. At the time I didn't think about that. That's where we lived. In retrospect, when I read those documents that Fred Harris had taken full responsibility for me, I thought, that is huge. I knew that that was part of the agreement. He'll be in charge of you and you can go. Again, having been in boarding school I didn't really think that meant that he was going to be checking on me all the time because that's not how it works when you are in a group situation like that. Looking back I can see that if something happened to me, he would have been liable. That was huge. I would be interested to know what his thoughts on that were. I knew I could do the job as a page. That wasn't my concern. I didn't really think about the safety thing. I hadn't had any trouble with safety yet. I didn't really think about it except there were mornings when I was walking to school in the dark in 20-degree weather by myself at 5:30 a.m. I was very vigilant. I was a good person to pick for that reason, as were the other girls. We all had these vigilant, aware personalities. We were good choices to start with because there really wasn't enough supervision for children. We were children. The boys didn't [have enough supervision] either. It really wasn't there. It's lucky that we got to do it so that girls could have the opportunity, but it needed work. We were good picks. I was vigilant. I remember looking around and walking to school.

SCOTT: Was this your first experience in a big city? Maybe you had lived in a big city in Massachusetts?

PRICE: I had vacationed, traveled in big cities. No, I was out in the woods in boarding school in Massachusetts. I had only been in big cities when I was traveling.

SCOTT: Washington, D.C., was a very tumultuous place at that time. What did you think of it?

PRICE: I had no concept, no concept. I knew that's what people said. I knew they were worried about us being hurt. I did not understand that because I had no experience. And yet it stayed in my mind when I was walking to school on those mornings. I was very careful. There were times when the Senate would go late and they would sometimes let us go home early, the girls, while it was still light. Or we would be walked home. We were told the pages would escort us everywhere, but that wasn't my experience. There was thought given to how late we worked. On weekends, when I didn't know what to do, occasionally I would walk into the city and walk around. That's when I would remember those warnings about Washington because I could see then that I wasn't quite sure if where I was was safe. I was vigilant enough to stay safe, and lucky, I'm sure. You have to say that we were lucky, too.

SCOTT: You mean lucky to have the opportunity or lucky that nothing happened?

PRICE: Lucky to have the opportunity but lucky that nothing happened. There are no guarantees.

SCOTT: So the compromise that was made to take full responsibility for the female pages, at least in terms of your relationship with Senator Harris, that didn't involve anything specific. He didn't have someone from his office escorting you around?

PRICE: They would check in on me when one of the legislative aides was over on the Senate floor. They would talk to me on my birthday, they would send me a note. Did I have lunch with him, or with someone in the office? Maybe, once in a while. I went out to their house to play football with his staff. His staff knew who I was when I went by there. I would just stop by their office. They may have been doing more to oversee me than I was aware of. They may have been checking in to see if I was doing okay, I don't know. There was no real helicopter supervision at all. And I didn't really need it at that age. But generally as 16-year-old girls go, you couldn't assume that they don't need that supervision. We were a lucky group that they picked.

SCOTT: You brought in this great photo for us of your swearing in ceremony on the 17th of May, 1971. Do you maybe want to say something about that? What were you thinking? What was going on there?

PRICE: It was, like I said, a whirlwind. We flew up. We stayed at a nearby hotel. I remember getting dressed for it and wondering what to wear. Should I put the bow [in my hair]? What to do with my hair? Feeling like a teenager, feeling like I didn't look right, I didn't look good. I had to come over and do it anyway. I came over and followed instructions and I was sworn in.

SCOTT: By the sergeant at arms, I believe?

PRICE: Right, I should know. I may have copies of it. I should have asked Patrick [Hynes] who that man is with us. I don't know who that man is. It must be the sergeant at arms. It must be [Robert] Dunphy or his assistant. Is that Dunphy?

SCOTT: I think it is. I don't know him by sight, but given what I know about what happened, I think he was the one who swore you all in. Senator Harris, did you walk over to this with him? Did you meet him before?

PRICE: We met him there, I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty sure we met him there.

SCOTT: What was he like?

PRICE: He was very friendly. Not someone that you felt uncomfortable with at all. Easy to relate to. I never felt intimidated or uncomfortable with him. Warm. Supportive. I remember when I was a very little girl and he was running for Senate, I believe they had a coffee or fundraising [event] at my parents' house. I was so excited because Fred Harris was coming to our house. I was little. As a little girl I was opening the door, guests were coming in. All of a sudden this man walked in and said, "Hi, I'm Fred Harris." I said, "Oh, Mom, Dad, he's here, he's here!" He was so ordinary that I hadn't assumed that this next person was Fred Harris. But I knew that that was the guest of honor. I knew him when I was really little, not knowing at all that I'd end up working for him. His wife LaDonna was extremely gracious, a wonderful woman.

SCOTT: You met her before you came to the Senate?

PRICE: I met her before, too, maybe at a political coffee [or] fundraiser, whatever that was. During campaigns, I'm sure I met her before. Also, she did a lot of work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I think that's what it was called then. I had an interest in that, being from Oklahoma. I think I met with her about that separately at times.

SCOTT: After the page experience?

PRICE: Before the page experience. Maybe when I was in boarding school, during that trip to Washington with my boarding school, I think.

SCOTT: What was a typical day like as a Senate page? What was that first day like, do you remember it?

PRICE: I remember the very first days. The very first day, I'm not sure if my memories are of that first day. I probably do because everybody was extremely nice to me. Most of the senators would come and introduce themselves to me and say they were glad that I was there. All of this I hadn't expected. I just came to do the job. I think we all were a little bit unaware of the size of what we were doing at the time.

SCOTT: You mean the significance of it?

PRICE: The significance of it. I never would have expected, for example, Senator [Edward] Kennedy [D-MA] is introducing himself to me and I'm thinking, I know who you are! I was ready to go to work for your brother. There's a certain disconnect. Even though I knew that I was the first girl page on the Democratic side, and I knew that's why he was introducing himself, somewhere in my mind it was like, "It's the other way around."

SCOTT: Paulette and Ellen worked for two Republican members, Senators Javits and Percy.

PRICE: I worked on the Democratic side and they were the first two on the Republican side. It was like, why are you introducing yourself to me? [referring to Sen. Kennedy] Then there was [Hubert] Humphrey [D-MN], and a lot of senators that I knew of, Humphrey, over the time I was there, was extremely friendly. His desk was right up front. He would chat with me at different times, ask how it was going. He offered to be my lawyer. If you need an attorney for anything, [just ask me or call me—Senator Humphrey said something like this]. I think he was serious though, in a way, if something came up he would be happy to help me. He would chat with me. The pages, the guys, were very warm and supportive and helpful. They showed me all the ropes. They helped me learn etiquette. I had come from this boarding school in Massachusetts in the '60s and I think I was joking around with them as we were setting up the Senate floor and said or did something that was something that teenagers will do. I might have made a symbolic gesture [laughs] of sorts. That's all I will say and the guys were like, "Whoa." They looked up in the galleries to see who was watching. I only did that once.

SCOTT: They didn't seem to be troubled, it wasn't awkward for them?

PRICE: They were not troubled at all, the guys. Even the senators who I don't think wanted us, like Robert Byrd [D-WV], Senator [James] Allen [D-AL], Sam Ervin [D-NC] did not want us, once we got there they were very cordial and gave us no trouble. One of them, it was either Byrd or Ervin, while they were debating women serving in the military, I think it was Sam Ervin who pointed to me and said, "Do you want this frail young thing [fighting in a war]?" You know? It was one of them in a southern accent, I remember. [laughs] I was used as an example of a female who probably shouldn't be serving in the military or something. In our everyday interactions, I worked for them. They would snap and we took our turn just like everyone else. Whatever they needed, we did. They were very cordial and supportive. They must have seen over time that there was no reason that we couldn't be there. It was something that you had to see it to believe it, I think. I had no problems. Even the cloakroom, we walked right in the cloakroom, in

and out. There was one room back off the Senate floor. There was a press area and a room adjacent to it—

SCOTT: The Marble Room?

PRICE: Maybe, where we did not go because it was for men only. The door was open. We peeked in. We didn't feel particularly intimidated. If someone had said take this in we probably would have. What was the worst? I don't really want to ask that. At that time I thought, "What's the problem?" I've seen guys with their shirttails out. I'm from the same planet. Of course, as an adult I'm aware that, who knows what I might have walked into! We had no problems. The sergeant at arms' office seemed a little touchy about things at times. They did.

SCOTT: Anything specific? Concerns for your safety?

PRICE: Concerns about the rules, I remember, following the rules. Coming up and maybe signing papers and discussing something. It's all vague, but I was aware that they were the disciplinarians, in a way. They made sure that we all behaved and did things right. I did sense that being a girl, I fell into a certain category. The other girls, too. They also managed all the press.

SCOTT: What was the relationship of the press with the three of you new female pages. Did they want to talk to you? Did they take a lot of pictures? Were you singled out in anyway?

PRICE: Yes. We got called off the Senate floor regularly, early on, to have interviews with representatives of different newspapers and magazines and things like that. The boys might have found [that] kind of annoying.

SCOTT: I'm sure! [both laugh]

PRICE: I think they've said that much at times. We got off work to go sit outside. Like the *New York Times* article, we were sitting out on the lawn chatting with the reporter and they were working. I think it still counted as our hours. There was quite a bit of it. At times I think we had mixed feelings about it. Do we really want to get up and go do this or go take a phone call? There may even be a note in that box from the cloakroom saying—I found it looking in these things for you—a note saying that a reporter wanted me to call them. Or there was a reporter on the line. We got to leave work and go get on the phone or make plans to meet someone.

SCOTT: What did the journalists want to know?

PRICE: The same things that you are asking, basically. How did we get to this point? How are we being treated? How is it going? Do we feel safe? Those kinds of things. About senators and things, we were pretty careful.

SCOTT: One of the things I was thinking was that at your age—I certainly would not, at your age, have been able to navigate that world. I just think I would have been overwhelmed. How did you do that?

PRICE: Nobody coached me at all. We all instinctively knew that we could say certain things, and other things we talked to each other about, but we didn't say them to reporters.

SCOTT: What kinds of things did you instinctively know that you should not be talking to reporters about?

PRICE: Our personal thoughts about someone. Or maybe that, let's say hypothetically, if we had passed someone in the hall and they had burped loudly, you know? They are just people! We would not have said that. We might have said, "Senator So-and-so, he's really funny." Or we've seen some interesting things, but instinctively we didn't go into details like that because we had a sense that it could be misused or something even though it's just what people do. But outside of the press we would all joke about it and laugh about it.

SCOTT: You didn't sit down with anyone from Senator Harris' office who said "We're going to—"

PRICE: I have absolutely no memory of anyone saying anything like that to me, ever. I do remember being a little—we would get a little embarrassed at times, the things we would say, like in the *New York Times* article, I'm the one who made the comment about bra burning, but they attributed it to Paulette who was really, I mean, Ellen was really the most outspoken and then me and then Paulette. When they attributed it to her, she was embarrassed, I think. But there wasn't anything we could do. I didn't mind saying that. But that was more out there than the kind of things we usually said. It wasn't personal for anyone except that it was my personal opinion.

SCOTT: It seems like the journalists want to link the three of you to this larger feminist movement that is going on in 1971 and the three of you seem to not really connect with it, maybe because of your age. What is your sense of that?

PRICE: I think we were very much part of it without knowing it because of our age. I had a slight sense of it because the Democratic Party was known to be more in tune with the whole feminist movement, but even I was not all that astute about it except that I didn't want someone telling me I couldn't do something because I was a girl, which is the essence of it. I was experiencing it in real time and in reality and not thinking about it theoretically, at all. I had a vague awareness of what was going on in the bigger picture. The same with Paulette and Ellen. It is interesting when I look back, how they were trying to link us. We were linked in a very real way because we were part of it, but not in our talk. It's interesting.

SCOTT: It is interesting. They saw something there. You hadn't made the connection.

PRICE: We were living it but hadn't made the connection in a theoretical way.

SCOTT: Did the three of you spend a lot of time together outside the page program?

PRICE: Quite a bit of time, yes. Ellen and I at times lived in the boarding house at the same time, so anything we did outside of work we would include each other or on weekends. Paulette lived with her family, but they would sometimes invite me to come out and stay with them. After graduation, Paulette and I took a trip to Disneyworld together.

SCOTT: Did you?

PRICE: Yes, to celebrate graduating. I think my mom went with us. It's funny, she remembers that and I don't. I don't remember my mom being with us but she does. We must have had an adult with us. So we spent quite a bit of time together. We've been back in touch lately.

SCOTT: You have a great picture here of your graduation from page school. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about not only this ceremony but what it was like to attend the Senate page school, the congressional page school.

PRICE: Yes, it was called the U.S. Capitol Page School. It was so different. It was quite demanding to get to the Library of Congress at 6 a.m. or 6:30. It was demanding in the way it was structured. The curriculum was not that demanding. Or maybe it was, I have to say I did not do that well at Capitol Page School because I didn't

take it, it didn't seem like a real school to me. I didn't take it all that seriously. Then I would get my report card and I would think, "This is real school! They are grading me on this!" [laughs] I usually got pretty good grades, you know. They were slipping, I won't go into details. It was a little unreal in that way. We would get there at 6:30. The pages would meet in the basement of the Library of Congress and have breakfast together in the café. Get our trays and go through the line and eat with other employees. There would be a few employees there going to work, but mostly pages. It had to be before 6:30, 6 a.m., eating breakfast. Then we would take the elevators up to the top floor and go to class and the big question was what time is the Senate going into session. If the Senate went in at 10, I think we had to be there an hour or two ahead of time. That would mean, let's say if it was two hours ahead of time, we got out at 8, so we went to school from 6 to 8. That was a long day [laughs]. If they went in early, at 8 or 9, we had 5-minute classes. It was surreal. I do think that though the experience was a great, great experience, I think my high school education suffered a little. I have dreams of finishing high school, not college, I know I did that. [laughs] But high school, I jumped around so much that every so often I would have these dreams of being in one of my various schools trying to get it done. Isn't that interesting?

SCOTT: It is.

PRICE: I understand it now because I did what I had to do to get through and graduate and not too much more.

SCOTT: You didn't have time?

PRICE: I do think that being that age and not being supervised, you get home from work and there's no one that says, "Do your homework." When I was in the school there, Ellen wasn't. You see, January to June of '72, there was no real peer to say, "What's our assignment in English? Have you done it? Let's do it together." It was a very different scenario than a regular [school], whether it was a boarding school or high school, I think you could say I was isolated in that way. I remember looking at my homework and thinking, "I should do this but I have to get up at 4." And thinking I'll do some. I do think it's a young age to be away from home. It was probably more stressful than I was aware of. In order to really study and learn well [kids] need to not be stressed out. I've learned this since.

SCOTT: Were you in contact often with your parents?

PRICE: Regularly by phone. Yes, I was. Like I say, I think it was a great and good thing. I think it was not perfect and that's one of the imperfections. I don't know.

Would I say it's balanced? The shortcomings of the educational structure balanced out? Probably. Probably because we stay there on the Senate floor. I have a real good sense now of how the Senate is supposed to function ideally. It doesn't sometimes. But I have a pretty good sense of that, of what it was meant to do and why, and I have a lot of respect for it.

SCOTT: How long do you think it took you to learn the ins and outs of what to do on the floor and where to go to find an office if you had to do an errand? Was it overwhelming in the beginning?

PRICE: It probably took about one month. Guys [pages] told me and showed me. If you got lost it wasn't a big deal. People would tell you where to go. When I first started, guys would walk me. After you do it so many times, anyway, you know where you are. You know how to get places. You know the shortcuts. You know where to get candy on the way. You know where the bathrooms are. That was not hard. That was not hard.

I think, looking back, what was probably stressful about it was what would be stressful to any child—that I was not aware of—was really being on my own with no real adult support or guidance and not being aware of it. I think that probably my schoolwork suffered from that. One of the teachers at the school took me to a concert one night, which I also didn't understand. She called and we went to the orchestra. [I went] with Mrs. Ulmer. I don't know if you've heard about her but she's renowned at the Capitol Page School, she taught anthropology. I'm sure she was extending herself because she saw the situation. That's not the best thing for kids. I ended up working with children, so I know that now. And yet I was able to handle it and wasn't aware then that it might be taking a toll in some ways. I did it fine. The actual job part was not hard. It was learnable and everybody was completely supportive. I am glad that they now have a better system in place. That makes sense.

SCOTT: They have changed it, I think, largely because many parents I'm sure as well as students were concerned about the level of education, how rigorous the studies were.

PRICE: When the pages get together—the first reunion was so interesting. We all talked about our page school experience. There were guys who wanted to go to medical school and they did eventually, but they had to patch up that time. There were guys that had trouble getting into college who were very smart. It wasn't an intelligence thing. It was an environment thing. The environment that we were in, we weren't able to do our best, really. And yet, would we trade it? Probably no one would trade it. Once you start

applying to colleges and everything, taking all the tests, [you realize] you didn't really have the full—I don't know the word I'm looking for—the full complement of high school courses behind you, education and experience. I don't say that to be critical of the school, really. I think it's great they have the school. It's just that that's where they were in the process.

SCOTT: One of the things that I thought was interesting, in particular, about your experience was that I see that you come in for about six weeks, maybe a little bit longer than that.

PRICE: May into July, I believe.

SCOTT: I see May 17 into early July. Then you got out for about six months and then come back the following January and serve for another six months. What happened?

PRICE: Originally, you see, I was supposed to serve from January until July. That was a typical page term. That is the one that I was appointed for. But I didn't get to start until May because of all the hoopla. Fred Harris was like, "We're sorry, we can't do anything." I guess Barbara Wheeler—"Other people were appointed to come and we only get so many pages that you can appoint." I had to leave when my term was over but I did want to come back and I wrote every single senator. I did. I still have these response letters somewhere, most of them saying, "We're sorry we can't appoint you, we have somebody scheduled for the year." I kept writing and writing and even Harris said that he couldn't reappoint me. But then it changed and I don't know what caused the change. Barbara Wheeler doesn't know, nobody knows, but for some reason it opened up for that spring term starting in January. They said, "You can come back."

SCOTT: Why did you want to come back so much?

PRICE: I don't remember why except that I think I preferred to be in D.C. than Bartlesville. It's not like I hated Bartlesville. I can't really answer that question. But I am sure that I wrote every Democratic senator. Again, I asked, what do I do? I want to come back, what do I do? Probably Senator Harris said, "Write to all the senators" and I did it. [laughs] And I got all these responses. They all had pages appointed so I didn't think that was going to work out either, but it did.

SCOTT: So you came back during your junior year in high school?

PRICE: That was my senior year in high school. I finished.

SCOTT: That's why you graduated here, because you are literally graduating from high school. That's pretty cool!

PRICE: We had a class ring and I meant to bring that but I forgot. I believe that I picked out the stone for it. Somebody was saying that we had to have a class ring for the girls, somebody in administration, and they told me to pick it out and I did. It was a little different from the boys. I don't know if they still have it now or not.

SCOTT: What was that second term like? Was it different than the first?

PRICE: Nope. Same thing, up early. That was when I was walking to school. That must be when I remember walking early in the morning, freezing cold, dark, no daylight savings. That had to be January or February, past construction sites and thinking, "I hope nobody jumps out at me!" I was walking fast.

It was the same. Early to school, hoped the Senate goes into session early. Try to keep up with my homework. I was applying to colleges, too, which I was a little clueless about. I guess I knew it was time and I feel lucky that I got into college, really. I did. Part of that was probably being a page. I was waitlisted at my first school of choice, which was Duke. My husband was on the same waiting list. That's so wild. But we didn't meet until years after. We were both waitlisted and then I was accepted at Colorado College. But when I first was waitlisted and I didn't know about Colorado College, then I got kind of serious. "Whoa, this is not a done deal." I had been distracted, to put it mildly. There had been a lot going on. It's not like today when everybody is applying to 30 schools and they are really focused three years ahead of time. I was like, "Oops, looks like it's time."

SCOTT: What do you remember about the members? Who were the stand-outs? Who were the people who you admired, either because of their politics or because of the way that they carried themselves or related to the pages? What was it like?

PRICE: Frank Church of Idaho I remember as having a huge amount of integrity that you could just feel. I took him a hamburger in his private office—

SCOTT: In his hideaway?

PRICE: Yes, it wasn't a regular place. I just have this memory of being so honored to take him his hamburger. Thomas Eagleton [D-MO] was another one that everyone spoke about and that I noticed. I remembered especially when he was nominated [to be George McGovern's running mate], I remember him as being—he was one that seemed so solid. He was one of those ones that you didn't see on TV a lot but

everyone said he is really solid. He is a really good senator, a good guy. You know, Robert Byrd was attentive and interactive and interesting. He didn't ignore us pages at all. As I said, Humphrey was very chatty and offered to be my attorney. McGovern [D-SD] I was impressed with. I have to say that Ted Kennedy was impressive. He was mid-career then. Who else? There is someone that I'm thinking of. Sam Ervin was interesting. He was such a southerner. I think I became more impressed by him when I saw him during Watergate. But then it all came together. I felt like I knew him. I sat not far from them day after day after day. Who else? A lot of the Democratic senators, [William] Proxmire [D-WI], they had this air of true believers in the good sense of that term. There is somebody else that I'm thinking of. Proxmire is one. Maybe it will come to me. But they were in the vanguard of these liberal movements in a genuine way. I had a lot of respect for them.

SCOTT: Were you aware of the political issues that were swirling about at the time?

PRICE: I was very aware of the Vietnam War. There was lots of debate and some filibustering and lots of bills related to the war. Patrick, my boss, he now has told me I got this wrong but I thought that he had a brother that served there. He, I believe, was in Vietnam. He talked to me all the time about the war. He even showed me his journals, which I believe were either about his brother in the war or about his experience in the war. They were very personal and they blew me away. He would always talk to me about how although the debates revolved around money, the most important thing was the human cost. [Patrick made me] very aware of that.

SCOTT: Senator McGovern being the Democratic candidate that year, he was perhaps the most vocal of those anti-war members.

PRICE: There was the issue of women serving in the military. There were a lot of late nights that revolved around that and appropriations and the budget all relating to the war. I was quite aware of that. It almost just sunk in. You understood it without even studying it because you listened to it all day. Like, if my dad called me at night and asked me about something I was surprised that I could explain it to him. It's not like I was taking notes! It's like, this is what they are going to do. You couldn't not know it after you sit there and listen all day. I was aware, more aware than your average 16 year old that wasn't working as a page or interested [in current events]. I also was interested. There is someone that I'm forgetting.

Mike Mansfield [D-MT]. He was huge. Mike Mansfield was someone who was very understated in his manner but very clear and deep and powerful in his positions. A really impressive majority leader.

SCOTT: To date, the longest serving majority leader in the Senate.

PRICE: That I didn't know. I used to be called up to his office to answer his phones for the secretary.

SCOTT: I had heard this, that they sometimes would bring in pages to do that. I guess when he had his office staff working on something else?

PRICE: Yes, or if they went to lunch or a doctor's appointment or something. I often would be the person called up to man her desk.

SCOTT: So what was that like?

PRICE: Again, I just took it for granted but here would come in Mike Mansfield with a trail of senators and dignitaries and then they'd go into his office and they would acknowledge me and I would answer the phone and take the messages and eat the chocolates in the drawer. I even had the gall to poke the center [laughs] to see if it was good and turn it over and somehow think that maybe she wouldn't notice! But she must have, I don't think that she cared. She kept having me back. When it would get slow I would find the chocolates in the drawer. It was a change of pace, sort of routine work. It's not exciting all the time. Sometimes it gets boring because it's slow and routine, but then the door opens and in they come and even then it's just routine, at the time. When you look back on it, it's like, "Whoa." But it's your job.

SCOTT: What about those times on the Senate floor, maybe during a long debate. How do the pages pass the time?

PRICE: We chat a lot, tell jokes, we would plan our breaks and our lunches and we tolerate it. Sometimes it's boring. I don't remember being able to sit there and doodle, or write notes. You learn to tolerate it. That's when it was amusing to sit by Herman Prager. You'd get this running commentary.

SCOTT: He was one of the pages?

PRICE: He was one of the pages. He's now a professor of history [political science] somewhere, but he was a disgruntled teenager at the time. I was a good listener

and listened to all of his grievances, many of which were right on target, I thought! But most people wouldn't say them. We amused ourselves, but sometimes it was boring, like life.

SCOTT: What about your interactions with Senate staff, maybe the cloakroom or the party secretaries? Did you have much interaction with them?

PRICE: The secretaries, meaning like the secretary of the Senate, the assistant secretary of the Senate?

SCOTT: I'm thinking more like the party secretaries.

PRICE: I don't think that I had a lot of interaction with party officials, though I did go to some big dinners, like those pictures. I don't know if those were congressional, or Democratic Party fundraisers. They may be like you see on TV, those press dinners. I think it's possible that we went to some of those. I went to a cocktail party at Averill Harriman's house. I know! I remember thinking, "Is that a real Monet?" [referring to a famous painting hanging in his home] [both laugh] There was this terrace in back that was sort of graded, different levels, and I was 16 drinking white wine in the back gardens of Averill Harriman's house.

SCOTT: How did you get these invitations?

PRICE: That must have come through Fred Harris' office. I had some contacts with legislative aides, or a page ahead of me who was staying on to work. I don't know, somebody was just like, "There's a thing at Averill Harriman's house tonight. Why don't you come?" Or, "You're coming." That may have been part of his overseeing me. I didn't have a lot of choice, but I didn't want a lot of choice.

SCOTT: How would you get there?

PRICE: I went in somebody's car. I did not walk. It was a townhouse. I did not walk. I got out and accepted a glass of white wine. I wasn't a big drinker or anything. I looked around the gardens. I wasn't sure who he was. [both laugh] Or what the big deal was! I'm not sure that I'd ever been anyplace that had all this original impressionistic art. The art was real. It was in the bathroom, that kind of thing. I took it for granted. That was my life at the time. I just wanted to be a page and here I was.

The cloakroom guys were really, really nice. I had no trouble. They were supportive. They would help me if I didn't know something. We had to punch a clock every morning with our time paper, what do you call that?

SCOTT: A time card?

PRICE: Yes, like a time card. You put that in a machine and it punched it. You would slide it in when you leave and maybe sign it. I did go with a group from the cloakroom to see Elton John once. I liked Elton John and he was playing somewhere in the suburbs. I drove in a car with Patrick and some of the cloakroom guys and I think a couple of wives. We drove out, I don't know where, and saw Elton John.

Everyone was really solicitous [in a good way] and supportive.

SCOTT: What do you think that you learned from this experience that has helped you later in life? What did this experience mean to you?

PRICE: I didn't realize this until later in adulthood. When things would go wrong in Congress, I have this feeling like it's a little bit mine. Like your family home in a way. If you hear that they are building a parking lot next to it or something, you might be upset. At different times, when they have been on the verge of passing legislation or changing the rules, there was a time when they were going to change the rules in a real sneaky kind of way. It was during the Bush administration, they called it the nuclear option. It meant overruling the parliamentarian. I remember very clearly that the parliamentarian rules. What he says goes. You just don't do that. I was very upset by that. Nobody that I associated with [in Pennsylvania] had any clue why I was upset by it. [Scott laughs] It was just when I was beginning to learn to e-mail and I got in touch with pages and said, "Is anybody else upset by this?" "How do they do this?" It's a proprietary feeling. That's what it is. Feeling like I'm overlooking [or watching] them now. It's strange. I think other pages feel a little that way, too.

Not only do I feel that way, but I'm protective of it. I have a lot of respect for the process, a huge amount of respect. I really learned the importance of debate and the value of good debate, and that what it does is that it distills the real essence of problems and clarifies them so that what can come out of it is better than the mess that precedes the debate. It takes time. I began to appreciate that the fact that it takes time is not a bad thing. A standstill is another thing, but the fact that it takes time is sometimes good. Otherwise, if things were rushed into, bad decisions would be made. It takes time to make well thought out decisions. I really gained a lot of respect for the process. When

something seems to challenge it, or there seems to be a problem with it, it upsets me. I'll walk around talking about it. [both laugh]

SCOTT: Have you remained political in your adult life?

PRICE: Off and on, maybe not quite as much as when I was a teenager. There have been years in my adult life when I had been preoccupied with other things and I haven't been—I haven't been disinterested or uninterested. But I've been so preoccupied that I couldn't focus on politics. Or sometimes I've been too busy. You can say that everything is political and I have remained political in that sense for my entire life. Lately I've gotten more involved in doing work on campaigns or elections, when I can. I think after going to college and living longer, I see that change comes in lots of ways other than just the political scene. That's one avenue of change, but the arts move change and educational institutions move change. I was a history major so that is the big question: what are the agents of change in history? It's not just politics or government. That's what I came to see.

SCOTT: You have been in contact with some other pages through the alumni group. Can you say something about that? How did you get in contact with them? When did you get in contact with them?

PRICE: I think it all began with the Internet. I don't think I ever thought I would see the pages again once we all took off on our own lives. Every teen really thinks that you are going to see your friends from high school. And then suddenly 20 years later you realize that you haven't seen them and you may not ever see them. Once the Internet came into existence I think that people slowly started to Google each other and slowly find—at some point I found a page blog, or what did they call it before blogs? A chat room? Something like that.

There was a site where you had to be approved to get in and come up with a name and a password. That was the first place that I got in contact with different people and found some of the people from my era writing in. They were the ones I wrote to when the nuclear option was on the table. They were concerned, too. They would send me information on the history of it. We'd be chatting online about it. "Does anyone know where so and so is?" Slowly people began to be included and they started having reunions. I think I missed the first reunion, that must have been 2004. Once I showed up online somebody said, "Where are the girls? Where are those first girl pages?" I had appeared, I said, "I don't know. Let's find Ellen and Paulette." Nobody knew where they were. We all found each other. The first page reunion we went to was so much fun. We really shared these experiences that so few people do. I hadn't seen these guys in forever.

One of them had stopped talking to me because he thought I was interested in one of the other pages. The first thing I said to him was, “You stopped talking to me.” He said, “You’re right. I was jealous because you were going out with so and so.” It was so wild! We just picked up right where we left off. “Why did you stop talking to me?” My husband had never seen me close down a bar at two or three in the morning. We just had so much fun. We had a reunion this year, which was also a lot of fun and I think they’ll keep having them.

It’s so interesting to hear how people’s lives have developed, or not developed. Hearing how people got beyond page school was fascinating. I had no idea. Here I’m having these reoccurring dreams of finishing high school. Others had to figure out how to get into med school with chemistry from Capitol Page School as their starting point, which didn’t quite cut it. I love getting together with the pages and chatting about things—and we have certain experiences that we don’t talk about. [laughs]

SCOTT: When you went to Colorado College, did you feel like you struggled a bit because of the level of the work that you’d been doing here?

PRICE: I think so. I ultimately made a lot of headway, but in the beginning I was not where high school students really need to be in terms of writing papers. I could read and think, but in terms of writing papers I felt that I had to put a lot more time into it. I ultimately got on top of it and it was a great school. But I look at kids now—where they are when they go off to college. They have a lot more experience in those areas than I did. I would say it was a scramble. I feel lucky to have gone there.

SCOTT: On the other hand you had a front row seat to something that most people would never see.

PRICE: I did and like I said, I don’t think I would trade it because I understand our system in a different way. That’s why it’s too bad that the House program is shut down. I do think we need to be constantly feeding young people back into society who have a real solid understanding. That can’t be bad. Most pages would agree that you get it in a different kind of way.

SCOTT: My sense was that the closing of the House page school revived this alumni group to get together, maybe to petition the House to reconsider their decision? Did you all talk about that?

PRICE: It was getting together before that, but that has become a focus of it now—to try to revive the House page program. They recently screened the new

documentary here and a lot of the talk [after the screening] was related to using the documentary as a tool to revive the program. There are lots of ideas and there will be an effort to do that. But the alumni association was already going and growing and that just added fuel to it and some fire.

SCOTT: What's your sense of how many people who went through the Senate page program are still active in politics or involved here on the Hill or in Washington?

PRICE: Right off the top of my head there is Greg King, Tom Gonzalez, Scott McGearry. Homer (Herman) Prager, like I said, teaches history [political science] to either college students or graduate students. Dan Schwick is in the ministry. Three of those I mentioned are in Washington, I know. We weren't a big group. Out of 12 or 15 sitting on that step, I would say a good percentage have maintained in some sort of role that is either in politics or government or related. That sounds like about a third that I can recall off the top of my head. Some are actually in Congress, I think. Bill Gates was a page. There was a congressman at the screening of the film. But I can't give you numbers. I can tell you that it's an interesting group of people. They are one of the most interesting groups I've ever been with, doing all sorts of interesting things.

SCOTT: If I might ask you a complicated question, what value do you think the Senate page program adds to the Senate, to Congress as an institution, to the nation? It's a big question, but I think it's important to get your sense of it. If the Senate ever decides to revisit the page program, it would be good for the pages to have said something about that.

PRICE: There was a lot of talk about that. One of the things that comes up is that, and I believe there is a congressman in the documentary talking about this or an ex-congressman, but seeing young people every day as part of your work, they are the people who are going to be the beneficiaries of the legislation that you pass. It's going to have an impact on them primarily. It's a really good reminder to everybody that is working in government. That's one thing that comes up. I think that fits in closely with the fact that I personally think that we have a big problem in our culture with how we care for our children and educate them and treat them and how we care for and support our mothers and families. I should say how we *don't* really support mothers and children. I think that to have young people out of sight would be a bad thing. Young people and the people who care for them are not that much on the radar screen anyway. I think it would be really risky to get them out of sight. I hope that never happens because they really matter. They will be the ones to continue the culture and the government of the country. That's not the only reason, it's just also to see them and realize what little human beings are. We weren't little, little, but we were babies, kids. Just to remind people that it's

about lives of vulnerable people, as well, I think is really important. I think they do matter. I think it could also be—if someone put a lot of thought into how to develop both of the page programs, pages could really contribute a lot to the whole culture. It would be reintroducing into the world kids with a level of knowledge like that, if it were really developed and presented well and worked with. It could be even better than it is or has been. It could be a desirable place for lots of young people and necessary, too. So it would be really silly—even if they say we don't need it because we have the Internet, there is plenty to do, I'm sure.

SCOTT: The Senate hasn't made all the electronic and digital improvements that the House has so it's still a different place over here. As you know, they are very different bodies.

PRICE: I will say that the pages know that the issue is not that there is not work. The issue is not money. We all know that. In the House the issue also has to do with the behavior of the grownups and that's not going to get addressed by getting rid of the pages. Those grownups will find new victims and that is ignoring the problem and it's also abandoning children to being victimized. That is really irresponsible, I think. The pages all know that.

SCOTT: Does the alumni group meet with the current pages when they come to Washington?

PRICE: Some of them. When we came we went on the Senate floor—it was so fun—and talked to all the girls. There are so many girls now. We were able to say—there was one from Oklahoma—I was able to talk to her and say, “I was from Oklahoma, too.” They don't know, they have no clue that there was a time when there were no girls. And the three of us together, I think a small group of us, I believe it was someone from your office, took us on the Senate floor. It was so fun, it was great.

SCOTT: Did it bring back memories?

PRICE: Totally. I had to take my son and show him the candy drawer. He's been twice now. The first reunion he was nine. At the first one, they wouldn't let me show him the candy drawer. The second time I was really careful to ask the right people so I was able to show him. That's fun for kids.

SCOTT: How old is he?

PRICE: Now he's 15. The first time I brought him he was nine. He sometimes says he wants to be a page. But he's also an athlete so that would be a problem. It was great. It brings back so many memories. The weird thing is that we were so used to it, we just walked in the Senate, when we came to work. Not now. When we were working you just walked in and walked right into the Senate. Now you have to go through all this hoopla. We were like, "Hey!" It's a time warp. You want to say, "But that is where I worked. I'm allowed to go in there." It's so strange.

SCOTT: What was security like back then? What do you remember about it?

PRICE: Well, they had security but not much. They knew who we were by the way we dressed. They didn't question us. Did we have IDs? We probably did but I don't remember showing my ID much. There were Capitol policemen everywhere and they knew who we were. We walked right into the building, right on the Senate floor all the time.

SCOTT: The pages have incredible access, just like the members.

PRICE: We had incredible access. We would use the credit union for our paychecks.

SCOTT: The pay was quite good, wasn't it?

PRICE: I was paid \$7,000 a year, which for a 16-year-old kid at that time was unbelievable. Again, that was not what I was interested in. I was shocked. The pay was great. We did tend to do what kids do. I still have notepads of Senate stationery. We thought that was for us, too. There was so much of it and it was just sitting in the hallway stacked up along with pens and things. We thought we could take a couple every day and used it for homework and stuff. I still have some of it.

SCOTT: What were your favorite errands to run? Your favorite places to go? Did you have favorites?

PRICE: I did. I liked answering the phones up in Mansfield's office. I liked going over to the Senate office buildings. Mostly it was senator dependent. I liked doing things for the senators that I admired, whether it was getting their shoes shined or bringing them a hamburger, that was fun. I think we went to a state of the union address. Ellen tells me that in that movie, what's that movie? It's not All the President's Men. It's another one where they have the state of the union address. I recently rented it and tried to zoom in on the pages but it's very hard to see. She says we are all hanging over the rail in the back.

It's very hard to see. I have a vague memory of going to it. I was trying to see if I was there? My memory is really vague. What is the name, All the President's Men? It's one of those.

The big dinners were fun that we went to.

SCOTT: Were you the only pages there? Were just the girls invited, typically?

PRICE: As you can see, the guys were there too. Sometimes there was an event and the guys would invite us like dates, but it was not really dating. It was just that we were right there. We could all go but we paired up. That was fun.

It was people dependent. You liked the runs [that's what we called errands we were sent on] where you saw either staff that you knew. Or sometimes that it was the runs that went past the cafes where you could get a snack on the way. Or something like that. One of the doormen in the Senate, I don't know his name, he used to give me perfume. That "Joy" perfume. It is incredibly expensive, I learned later in life. When I left he had this gift for me. He seemed to really like me. When I left he gave me this bottle of perfume. It's called "Eau de Joy" and that was just how nice everyone was. He didn't do it while I was working because that might have seemed inappropriate. But when I left he had this gift for me.

SCOTT: Did you parents come out to get you when you graduated?

PRICE: Yes, they came out for my graduation.

SCOTT: Where was the graduation held?

PRICE: I want to say the Dirksen Building. It was held in a committee room, in a meeting room. We all sat up on the dais, except it was curved. There was a speaker who I don't remember. It was not memorable. Afterwards there was a party. That was it. Everybody went home. At that time I was also running for delegate in Oklahoma to the Democratic convention.

SCOTT: Were you?

PRICE: I was.

SCOTT: Did you make it?

PRICE: I did, which was a fluke of sorts. I was lucky, they needed a female and a young person. I had this experience and I ran as an uncommitted delegate. I liked Humphrey, but I ran uncommitted. The McGovern people got behind me, too, because I was better than the other choices, they thought. I fit the quota. Ultimately I was a McGovern delegate because I voted with him on the California challenge.

SCOTT: You did?

PRICE: That was a huge issue.

SCOTT: Humphrey wanted to split the votes and it was a winner take all state.

PRICE: I voted winner take all because you don't change the rules in the middle of the stream. I thought it through and I thought, you don't do that now, now is not the time to change the rules. That's the right thing to do. Then the governor, who was also a member of that delegation, and Carl Albert wanted to change my vote. They tried to. I went out to get something to eat and somebody came and got me and said, "They are trying to change your vote." I think they thought—they said, "I thought you were with us?" That was that uncommitted thing. I was very earnest. I was like, "I am, but I don't think that you change the rules while you are crossing the stream [meaning mid-stream]. Those are the rules. And McGovern gets those delegates."

SCOTT: What did they say?

PRICE: They were like, "Well, okay." I was more outspoken and confident than I would be now because I saw things more in black and white. "I'm with you because I'm here, but that doesn't mean that I am going to do everything that you tell me to do." Again, I was a little feminist and didn't know it. "These are the things that I believe in."

I voted for Thomas Eagleton, too, instead of Fred Harris, and I walked out and cried because I felt like a traitor. The Harris people were mad at me on the floor. They were. I wrote Senator Harris a letter and explained my vote. He wrote back and told me that I did the right thing.

SCOTT: What did you say to him?

PRICE: I said that Eagleton needed a vote of confidence because he was not very well known. I don't think I said in the letter that it didn't look like Harris was going to get the vice presidential slot anyway, but it did look like that. So that vote would not have been used very well. But Eagleton really needed a show of confidence. He needed every

vote he could get. Like I said I saw things in black and white and I was confident. I voted for Eagleton. I wrote that to him and he wrote back quickly and said that I did the right thing. That I will never forget because I felt terrible. I felt like a real traitor.

SCOTT: Because he had supported you and sponsored you and you had worked for him.

PRICE: Yes, and he was running for vice president and his staff, some of them were delegates and they were kind of mad at me. It is such an adolescent thing to feel like you do the right thing. It's so characteristic of adolescence. You stick with it. That's what I did. [The convention] was another wild [experience]—and there were some pages there.

SCOTT: Other delegates?

PRICE: Yes, because there are pages at the convention and some of them are congressional pages that get there.

SCOTT: To staff the members?

PRICE: They work there. They do other jobs. Patrick Hynes was there that year for something because he was still secretary of the Senate or assistant secretary. The [future] governor of Virginia was there, Mike Partridge was there. I think some others, too.

SCOTT: You went out to Florida? What did your parents think of that? You went out there by yourself?

PRICE: [The reason] I thought of it is because I had to fly back and run for delegate in Oklahoma and then fly back and graduate from page school. I forgot. My family [including my grandmothers, I believe, and Mary Johnson, who had worked for my family and was like a mother to me] was here for the graduation and I went back to Oklahoma and ran for delegate and I remember I sent my dad a telegram saying, "I won!" That must have been when he started saying he was introducing himself as Julie Price's dad! That's about the time because there was a lot of press about that, too. It was short, momentary. I had a busy graduation. I wasn't quite 18 and you had to be 18 to go to the convention. I turned 18 that June, after I graduated.

SCOTT: What an experience.

PRICE: Then I went off to college and became more introspective.

SCOTT: What do you do now?

PRICE: I haven't been working right now, but the work that I do is called, I'm a child life specialist. I work with children in hospitals who are—I do therapeutic work with kids in hospitals. I have been on the “mom track” for a while. I'm looking for part-time positions now and there aren't many. Before I had my son I was working in New York with a pediatric AIDS program. Most people don't know what we do but it is also political in the sense that kids really need some sort of therapeutic intervention so that they are not traumatized just by the experience of being sick and hospitalized. The whole thing can be pretty traumatic because they don't understand. And that's what we do. That's why I have a special interest in children and childhood and the page program. That's why I see [reinstating the House page program] as valuable and why I'm aware of how much children and families are not on the radar screen like they should be, in my opinion. It comes from that. I'm not in politics or government.

SCOTT: But you are still an activist, at least an advocate.

PRICE: I'm an advocate and an activist when the opportunity arises. I recently joined a public policy task force within my profession to look at areas where we might want to be more vocal in terms of public policy. We're just exploring it. I think that's why I'm a good person to have on the task force. There is a former PR person on the task force, a former legislative aide, I think who has worked on Capitol Hill, who is now a child life specialist. She's also on the task force. We're just exploring. We're invisible in some ways because our job is not to draw attention. Our job is to reduce anxiety and get in there and make things better without raising anxiety. As a result we are not all that visible. But we do have a point of view.

SCOTT: That's interesting. You found a way back to a public policy position.

PRICE: It's true. It all ties in. It's interesting because here as a page, I was a child, too.

SCOTT: Is there anything that you'd like to mention that we haven't talked about?

PRICE: I think that we've covered a lot. I think that one thing that I think is important, and this is partly my interpretation, but there is always this controversy about who was first. At the time I have to say that we were all aware that we were the firsts. I was the first on the Democratic side and Paulette was the first to set foot on the Senate

floor. Ellen began working on the Hill first, in Percy's office. We were aware of those distinctions and we were trying to figure out who was sworn in first and who worked first but we were first together and I think that is interesting. There were three senators that did it together. I think that's important to remember in this world of one-upmanship and feeling like it has to be decided that one person wins and somebody else loses. I may someday put together a book that emphasizes this. It was three girls and we did it together. I wonder if it had only been one girl and one senator if it would have happened. That's where I say it's my interpretation. It's possible that it took more than one and it took at least three to get it done.

SCOTT: And from both parties.

PRICE: From both parties, and it's interesting that it was about three girls doing things in a more cooperative kind of way. Though we were rivals a little bit, we also were aware that most of our press stuff was the three of us. In our home states, maybe we were more focused on as singletons, and that's why I was so surprised when I saw the film and stuff [other presentations and books]—that it was getting narrowed down to two. I was like, "Wait. You left me out." I think that's a good thing to remember. Things don't just get done by having one winner and one loser.

SCOTT: The significance is not in the first.

PRICE: The tradition was changed, and this is how we did it. We weren't trying to be the first, we just wanted to do the job. That's another thing.

SCOTT: We are really thankful to you, not only for bringing that to our attention but also for also taking the time to come here and talk to us about your experience. This will be an interesting addition to our collection and an informative addition to our collection. We like to get the page stories and yours is, in particular, a really interesting one because you were one of the first.

PRICE: I'm sure that Paulette and Ellen would be happy to talk to you. I don't know if it's as easy for them to travel. Ellen has ALS, I don't know if you know that? She does. She has made it to both reunions. I don't want to get choked up.

SCOTT: Perhaps at the next reunion.

PRICE: She was in a wheelchair at the last reunion. She has a really interesting mind. She is a really interesting person. Paulette, too. I saw them both at the reunion.

There will be another one. I'm sure that they have things to add that I am not telling you. I'm sure they are willing—it's just not as easy for them to get here.

SCOTT: Good. I look forward to the next reunion and maybe having the chance to sit down with them if they are in town.

PRICE: You know how to reach me, if you want to reach them at the reunion or whatever, you can go through me.

SCOTT: That would be great. Thank you, thank you so much.

PRICE: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]

[Pictures on the following page, clockwise from top left: Senator Fred Harris (D-OK) attends Julie Price's swearing-in ceremony in 1971; Price (kneeling, far right) and Paulette Desell (kneeling, second from the left) with the Senate Page class of 1972; Price and fellow page attend the Capitol Page School graduation; (from left to right) Price, Ellen McConnell, and Paulette Desell, the Senate's first female pages; Price's Capitol Page School yearbook picture, 1972]

