

Chapter 6 – The White City

Washington, DC, in January 1947 was a city transformed by the double impacts of the New Deal and the Second World War. The massive expansion of the Federal government brought on by the crises of the Great Depression and the War had expanded a city of less than 500,000 people in 1929 to one approaching 800,000 in 1947. Another 400,000 lived in the surrounding urbanized area in Virginia and Maryland. The 1950 census would rank the city the ninth and the urbanized area as the eleventh most populous in the nation.

Of the Class of '46 arriving in January 1947, 27 were from districts without census-defined urbanized areas and another 27 were from districts with considerably smaller urbanized areas. The 17 from the Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia areas found a smaller metropolis. Only Hugh Meade from Baltimore, George MacKinnon and Edward Devitt from Minneapolis-St. Paul, Claude Bakewell and Frank Karsten from St. Louis, William Crow from Pittsburgh, Homer Jones from Seattle, and John Brophy and Charles Kersten from Milwaukee found a comparably sized urban area in Washington.¹

But Washington was unique. It was not a major manufacturing or trading center; its industry was government. Forty percent of its work force would be employed in government in 1950 compared to 8% to 14% in the comparable cities above. It differed in other ways. Its white population was less ethnic, 5% foreign born compared to 5% to 12% in the other cities. It had more nonwhites, 35% versus 2% to 24%. It was often commented that it was more heavily female, particularly among those of working age. Of those employed in 1950, 43% were women, compared to 30% to 37% in the comparable cities.²

Journalist Jonathan Daniels characterized Washington as “a town of people clinging in political insistence to small-town residences while they are dependent for life on room service at the Mayflower.”³ This says less about hicks in the big city than about pretense in office. Only 19 of the new congressmen in January 1947 came from districts that were more than 75% rural by the Census definition. Howes Meade from Paintsville, Kentucky, represented a district only 7% urban. The largest town would be Hazard with a population of 6985 in 1950. Paintsville had 4309 people. Melvin Snyder of Kingwood, West Virginia, population 2186, represented a district which was 17% urban. The biggest town was Morgantown with 25,525 people.

Yet Morgantown was the home of West Virginia University, and both Snyder and Meade had spent years overseas in the Army, even if they saw the Pacific and not Paeë. The most well-known rural member of the Class of '46 is Carl Albert, who famously grew up on a farm near Bug Tussle, Oklahoma, called McAlester, population 18,000, home, and represented a district that was 20% urban. But Albert had seen the Pacific, too, thanks to the Army, as well as Oxford, England, thanks to a Rhodes scholarship. President and Justice William Howard Taft reportedly said that any American town of more than 5,000 people had at least one man qualified to be on the Supreme Court. The same could be true of the House, but 35 of the Class of '46 failed this pseudo-test.⁴

One searches hard for a true rube among those representing the most rural districts. Perhaps the least traveled was Otto Passman of Monroe, Louisiana, population 38,572. Born on a farm near Franklinton, Louisiana, population 2542, and educated at a business college in New Orleans, Passman served in the

¹ “Urbanized” (50,000+ population) was different from Urban (2500+ people).

² Lewis, 365. Daniels, 6.

³ Daniels, 7.

⁴ Cited by Harry Truman in Merle Miller, 29.

Navy in the War as a procurement officer, seemingly never leaving the lower Mississippi. But he was a successful businessman, owner of a manufacturer and retailer of commercial refrigerators, an investment company, and a furniture business in Monroe, as well as a wholesale company in Fort Smith, Arkansas. He was a grand master of the Louisiana State Masonry, and a State commander of AMVETS, one of the major post-World War II, national veterans' organizations. All of this before election to Congress.

It is doubtful if any of the new members of Congress found the city of Washington intimidating, though Harold Youngblood of Detroit found it criminal, when his car was broken into and clothing stolen in January 1947.⁵

On the other hand, with the War Washington had become the political center of the world. Journalist Russell Baker wrote that Washington, "freshly embarked on a global career more astounding than the Founding Fathers ever conceived, may have entered her Golden Age. Unprepared, almost unawares, she has become the focus of the world's fear and hope, a global crossroads where monarchs pause and the polyglot peoples of the earth gather to assist the shaping of their destinies."⁶

The massive Capitol on its hill dominated a government complex ruled from the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue by the inhabitant of the White House – two buildings in 1947 much in need of the repair they would soon receive. To the Capitol's east stood the 13-year-old Supreme Court building and two buildings of the Library of Congress, one only eight years old. North of the Capitol was the Senate Office Building and south of it the two House Office Buildings, the Old, and the New, the latter dating from 1933.⁷

The government complex had seen much construction during the 1930s, with some of it predating, if only in conception, the New Deal. Down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House were the Federal Trade Commission (1938), the National Archives (1935), the Department of Justice (1934), and the Commerce Department (1932). Down Constitution Avenue on the north side of the Mall were the National Gallery (1941), the Internal Revenue Service (1936), the Post Office Department (1934), and the Federal Reserve (1937). On the south side of Constitution Avenue was a run of temporary buildings, "tempo" in the DC dialect, some dating from the First World War but much expanded during the Second, with the three-story Navy and Munitions Building enduring until 1971, the last of its kind, flanking the reflecting pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

The current museum row from the Smithsonian Institution castle on the mall north of Independence Avenue had a small collection of older museum buildings leading to the Department of Agriculture (1930), which straddled the Avenue with two pedestrian bridges to its newer component south of the Avenue (1936). Otherwise, the south side included a large collection of restaurants.

There was much more Federal government in the District and its surroundings than in this central area, which had such a large collection of rather new, mostly classically-inspired, white-faced buildings to compliment the Capitol. Despite the ugly tempo and the strange collection of museum buildings and the crush of commercial establishments to the south, the view down the mall from Capitol Hill past the equestrian statue of Ulysses Grant and the soaring Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial could be and was impressive and even inspiring. And perhaps intimidating to many new members of Congress, even if they were not hayseeds.

⁵ *Detroit Free Press*, January 5, 1947.

⁶ Russell Baker in Busse, unpaginated.

⁷ Bergheim gives a good historical overview of the city's structures and is the source of this review.

Unfortunately, the volume of residential construction in Washington through the tight money of the Depression and the tight building materials of the War did not keep up with the number of offices the Federal Government added during those periods. Places to live remained in short supply in late 1946 when that class began coming to town looking for housing. Daniels wrote that Washington “was crowded from the slums around the Capitol to the mansions over Rock Creek” and that “old converted mansions [were] turned into boarding houses bulging with country girls.” Washington’s housing shortage mirrored the country’s. Columnist Bill Henry wrote from Washington of the new members of Congress: “Most of the available homes are for sale, not for rent – and who wants to buy a house at these prices with politics what they are?”⁸

The lily-white Class also found that much of the city was nonwhite, given the segregated housing patterns. There was a small white area immediately to the northeast of the Capitol and another immediately to the east of the White House. Across the Anacostia River was a white area south of Pennsylvania Avenue, but by far the largest white area was the northeast beyond Columbia and Park and the northwest beyond New York Avenue. If the member was not too sensitive about race, Georgetown was acceptable as were the fringes of the lily-white northeast and northwest. Closer in, the areas to the southeast of the lily-white Capitol area and west of that section near the White House would do.⁹

Restrictive zoning and red-lining kept the patterns relatively static until the Supreme Court struck down restrictive covenants in May 1948, and there was a jump in areas open to black Washingtonians.¹⁰ By the 1950 Census, the trans-Anacostia area south of Pennsylvania Avenue would remain lily-white, and development of far south Anacostia would open up a new lily-white area. The northeastern and northwestern lily-white areas would contract as would the area east of the White House, while those east of the Capitol and west of the White House would show a great deal of white flight.

Overall, Washington was a segregated city; “the patriarchs who give character to the Congress, and so to much of the city, are mostly the men of the South,” as Baker put it. On the other hand, Lindy Boggs, coming to Washington in the 1940s from New Orleans with her representative husband, Hale, felt “that Washington was not as strictly segregated as I had expected. Public transportation and theaters were open equally to all and the government work-force and professional staffs were integrated.” Yet the premier performance space in town, the National Theatre, was segregated. Recreational facilities and department store lunch counters would not integrate until the early 1950s, and the schools would desegregate only after *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Congress itself included but two black representatives, from Chicago and New York City, and no black senators. The Capitol was segregated. The black staffers of the two black representatives (no other representative had black staff until Helen Gahagan Douglas hired a black woman during the 80th Congress) could not eat in the dining rooms.¹¹

Most new members set out as early as possible to find a place to live in Washington, either by contacting acquaintances or traveling to the capital or both. Those from one-party districts, mostly Southern Democrats, got a head start, not having to wait until the November election results were in.

⁸ Daniels, 6. *The Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1947.

⁹ 1940 Census.

¹⁰ Constance Green, 283. *Shelley v. Kraemer*.

¹¹ Russell Baker in Busse, unpaginated. Boggs with Hatch, 75. Bergheim, 46-7. Constance Green, 292-308. Helen Gahagan Douglas, 252.

Hamilton Jones from Charlotte, North Carolina, wrote in March 1946 to a DC cousin as well as to the incumbent from his District, who was not seeking a place in the 80th Congress, asking for leads. Jones had not even received the nomination yet and had declared opposition but was the favorite. It appears he managed to secure an apartment in June, which was after the primary. John Bell Williams of Mississippi beat him easily in the housing race, getting an apartment in Georgetown with the help of the Washington Board of Trade by April, even if it was too small to bring his bulldog Mickey. Williams' primary was not until July, and he would run second in it, awaiting the run-off.¹²

Those cautious enough to await the primary results appeared to run a risk or joked that they did. Don Wheeler of Georgia was saying days after his primary win in July that he was thinking of a trailer or a tent in DC. Two months later he claimed to have a tip on an apartment that a Florida congressman was vacating. At the same time, Henderson Lanham, also from Georgia, was in DC looking for a house but thinking he would have to surrender to a hotel. In September, Olin Teague of Texas had been more successful and rented a house in suburban Maryland, which he had found through a friend of a friend. Being earlier than November did not always pay off. Frank Wilson of Texas had moved into a hotel in October with his family while looking for a home, for which he was still looking in January. Omar Burleson of Texas also moved into a hotel with his wife to look for a house, but for a general election shoo-in was remarkably tardy, not leaving for Washington until December 20. Even the temporary housing necessitated by a house-hunt could require contacts. Carl Albert sublet a suite at the Jefferson Hotel thanks to a wartime friend.¹³

Connections were important but not always successful. The Navy connections of Captain Willis Bradley of California did not pay off, but his Masonic brothers came through. Idahoan Abe Goff's DC friend found him a rental house if Goff would care for the owner's cat. Goff replied, "We love cats," but the rental was for only two months. E.A. Mitchell of Indiana got the apartment of his predecessor Charles La Follette, who ran unsuccessfully for the Senate, but did not secure it until March. The most curious connection was that of Toby Morris, who dealt with realtor Victor Wickersham, who had just lost his runoff to Class member Preston Peden, all of Oklahoma.¹⁴

The housing frustrations of the Class were common. It was reported that Wingate Lucas of Texas was still spending all his spare time looking for a place in mid-January. Ernest Bramblett of California reported an "exhaustive search that paid off only in February." Bakewell said it took a month, and several landlords refused to rent to a family with two children. Richard and Pat Nixon of California arrived in Washington in early December, took a hotel room and were still there when ten-month-old Tricia arrived with her grandparents on January 2. Lengthy hotel residency was common, while a futile house search continued.¹⁵

Even when successful, there were complaints about cost. Burleson got an unfurnished apartment and found furniture prices "at an all-time high." MacKinnon thought housing prices were "exorbitant." Charles Russell of Nevada reportedly had to sell his newspaper and his home in Ely to afford the move to Washington. When he and Marjorie returned to Nevada, they stayed with her father. And

¹² Hamilton C. Jones to Frank H. Myers, March 28, 1946; Hamilton C. Jones to Sam J. Ervin, Jr., March 28, 1946; Hamilton C. Jones to Mrs. Thomas Meacham, June 14, 1946; Jones Papers. *The Charlotte News*, March 16, 1946. *Clarion-Ledger*, April 6, 1947. *McComb Enterprise-Journal*, February 19, 1947.

¹³ *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 21, September 25, 1946. *Corsicana Daily Sun*, September 26, 1946. *Amarillo Daily News*, January 17, 1947. *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, October 15, 1946. Albert with Goble, 150.

¹⁴ *The Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1947. *The Post-Register*, December 10, 1946. *The Palladium-Item and Sun-Telegram*, March 31, 1947. *Miami Daily News-Record*, January 2, 1947.

¹⁵ *Amarillo Daily News*, January 17, 1947. *Santa Maria Times*, February 3, 1947. *The Ithaca Journal*, February 7, 1947. Conrad Black, 87. *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, January 2, 1947. *The Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1947.

accommodations were sometimes less than ideal. Charles Deane of North Carolina found an apartment early, but it was barely furnished and his kids called it “the black hole of Calcutta.”¹⁶

A further problem was that the congressional session was expected to last only half a year. Hotel leases could be, but were not necessarily, temporary. Apartment or house rentals were less likely so. Furthermore, the member expected to return in another year. Holding onto an acceptable domicile was wise, even if paying for a vacant place was expensive. Some did not or could not hold on. Wilson, who had acquired a house in Bethesda, Maryland, for the session, had to rent a hotel room for the unanticipated special session late in 1947. In 1948 Deane subletted his apartment after the regular session and then was offered an air-conditioned housekeeping apartment for that year’s special session.¹⁷

Other members of the Class were happier and luckier. Katherine St. George made arrangements for a hotel apartment within two weeks of winning the election but only after finding that Frederic Coudert, also of New York, had scooped up the one she initially wanted. Antoni Sadlak of Connecticut had rented a house before the middle of December. William Dawson of Utah beat Sadlak, reportedly leasing a house in “stylish” northwest Washington for half the going rate within a week of arriving on December 2. Then there was John Kennedy. With his sister Eunice as hostess, his aide Billy Sutton, a maid, a cook, and a butler he moved into a Georgetown rowhouse across the street from the Secretary of Commerce. The house had a paneled library, a large dining room with mahogany furnishings, a drawing room with a baby grand piano, and, obviously, servants’ quarters.¹⁸

After the dust settled enough to report Washington addresses for the *Congressional Directory*, the Class had overwhelmingly populated northwest Washington, the most upscale part of town. Two, Lucas and Charles Russell, were in northeast Washington. Six, Deane, Karsten, Crow, Robert Jones and Laurie Battle of Alabama, and Edward Jenison of Illinois, settled across the Anacostia. Seven, Nixon, Devitt, Glen Johnson of Oklahoma, Parke Banta of Missouri, George Sarbacher of Pennsylvania, Thomas Owens of Illinois, and Porter Hardy of Virginia, called Alexandria home. James Davis of Georgia moved to Arlington. Wilson, Dawson, and Prince Preston of Georgia took to Bethesda, and Teague to Chevy Chase.

Almost all of the rest were in the northwest, including John Davis Lodge of Connecticut, who took a second floor apartment in the Wardman Park residency, next to the building his mother lived in. There were ten members of the Class in the Wardman Park, which combined a hotel with a residential suite tower, seven in the Mayflower, presumably with room service, and five in the Statler, a new hotel. Those in the last two hotels plus four others of the Class formed a clutch of sixteen near the White House. Closer to the Capitol were Dayton Phillips of Tennessee and Richard Vail of Illinois, who bunked in the Raleigh Hotel across Pennsylvania Avenue from the Old Post Office, and Lanham and Wint Smith of Kansas in the George Washington Inn just north of the Capitol. Those further away could drive to provided parking at work or take the streetcar or a cab, though reportedly cabbies did not like to pick up congressmen.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, December 18, 1946. *Mason Valley News*, January 21, 1949; July 21, 1950. Deane, 76-7. Confidential interview.

¹⁷ *The Austin American*, November 24, 1947. John A. Lang to Charles Deane, June 29, 1948; Alvin Aubinoe to Charles Deane, July 16, 1948; Deane Papers.

¹⁸ *Middletown Times Herald*, November 12, 1946. *The Hartford Courant*, December 11, 1946. *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 15, 1946. *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, December 28, 1946. *The Morning Herald* (Uniontown), January 9, 1950. Lance Morrow, 3, 8.

¹⁹ DeLong, 134. Six, including Coudert and Sadlak, did not list a local address in the 1947 *Directory*. Five listed Washington addresses which are now unclear. Charles Fletcher of California and Harold Youngblood of Michigan listed their Old House Office Building suites as their local address. *Chester Times*, January 8, 1947.

Some of the addresses, intentionally or otherwise, were temporary. By the 1948 session at least 22 would move.

Lindy Boggs' daughter Cokie Roberts noted the "very attractive New Orleansians" who worked in her father's House office; the beauty of clerical staffers was a recurring theme. Some of these comments may have been simply chivalrous hyperbole, but the surfeit of young women in Washington was a reality. What with most representatives far from home, the opportunity for non-political compromise could be a possibility, although most brought home with them in the persons of their wives.²⁰

It was the rare wife who did not want to share the adventure her husband was experiencing, as she had shared his previous career and political campaigns. The experience of Washington might become dulled by the heat of summer, and for those with school-age children there was the competing issues of either forcing them to leave their friends to relocate to Washington or to farm them out to others so the wife could remain in DC. The former option carried the extra issue that Congress would likely adjourn in the summer and there would be a relocation back to home district schools in the fall. The latter option meant the mother would likely be bouncing back and forth between two homes.

While the representative had an incentive also to frequently return to the district to maintain his contacts and serve his constituents, travel for those from too far away for easy train or car trips dealt with a commercial airline service that had not yet matured. Some handled the problem as did the Mortons, who kept their fourteen-year-old in a boarding school in Virginia and left the ten-year-old in school in Louisville, while Belle accompanied Thruston in DC. Some wives like Jennie Youngblood of Detroit waited back home until her two younger children were out of school in the summer to move to Washington.²¹

There were, of course, the bachelors: Vail aged 50, Harold Donohue of Massachusetts aged 45, Hardie Scott of Pennsylvania 39, Phillips 36, Bryan Dorn of South Carolina 30, Kennedy 29. Some were divorced: Jacob Javits aged 42 and Robert Tripp Ross 43 of New York, and John Blatnik of Minnesota 35 (although possibly still nominally married and with a son, but claiming he was single). Also secretive was Peden who had married a German woman in 1945, a fact he kept undisclosed until September 1948, though she and their son were brought to Falls Church outside DC in May 1947. Some were widowed: Howard Coffin of Michigan in 1945 now age 69, Francis Love of West Virginia also in 1945 age 45, and Georgia Lusk of New Mexico, 53, who had lost her husband in 1919.²²

Much has been said of Kennedy's romantic adventures over the years. Future Speaker Thomas O'Neill would write of Kennedy in the House, "He also liked the ladies, and he had more fancy young girls flying in from all over the country than anyone could count." Another account would report that when Kennedy ran for the Senate in 1952 there were voiced complaints that he was too fond of girls, to which one of his supporters responded, "Well, let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, I've never heard it said of Jack Kennedy that he's too fond of boys."²³

A few had wives who did not move with them to Washington. Ruth Foote, with three of her four children still of school age, kept them back in Connecticut. Jerry Lucas had three children of six and younger plus another on the way when Wingate took office; the now six-person family would move to DC

²⁰ Roberts interview.

²¹ *The Courier-Journal*, January 4, 1947. *Detroit Free Press*, February 9, 1947.

²² *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, March 28, 1946. *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 4, 1946. *The Boston Globe*, February 11, 2017. John Arnold Rigos, Minnesota Birth Index. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 15, 1948.

²³ O'Neill with Novak, 87. Galbraith, 355-6.

from Fort Worth in the family car and a half-ton pickup with canned goods and other groceries, but not until October, 1947. Lanham's one child was married; his wife Anne and he separated at some point, were divorced by 1950, and she did not accompany him to DC in 1947. Franklin Maloney's one child was an adult, but his wife Charlotte Bendewald Maloney remained in Philadelphia; they would also separate. All three of Charles Deane's children were in school, but the major reason wife Agnes remained in North Carolina was to run the family insurance business. The one husband of a Class member, George St. George stayed behind. Their only child, Priscilla, had already married, divorced, and remarried, and had produced a grandson, St. George Biddle Duke, for the Representative.²⁴

The divorced Javits married for the second time in November 1947 and the next day took his new wife Marion to Washington because he had a committee meeting. She was less than thrilled and soon quit coming often to DC. Juliette McMahon of New York also chose to stay home, giving birth to their first child in March 1947. Others who did come were not taken with the City or the life. Rosemary Smathers of Florida, with two young children, would say that she "was baffled by the parties where everyone seemed to know each other and no one bothered with introductions." Husband George said years later, "She didn't like the life here, and she didn't like the activity, with me being gone a lot and that sort of thing. She was a more normal wife who likes to be the hell out of Washington, doesn't want to be here, entertaining and having people ringing you on the phone all the time."²⁵

Millenia of the presence of wives have not always resulted in faithful behavior on the part of husbands, but one is left only to speculate, if one desires to, about the character of the Class of '46. Philandering was once not a public exercise, and third-party observers were once as reluctant publicly to report as were the participants. It is rare to encounter anything even so much as Nixon's observation that his married friend Donald Jackson of California "liked the girls and they liked him."²⁶

Those wives who did relocate to Washington, at least for a major part of the House sessions, had a few options for organized social activities other than the formal individual activity of calling on each other and attendances at embassy parties and White House receptions. There was an 80th Congress Club of wives of new members of both houses, presided over by Harriet Bricker, wife of the Ohio Senator. Daisy Burke from Ohio was a vice-president. The secretary was Elizabeth Williams of Mississippi. Eva Tollefson of Washington was treasurer. Members of the program committee included Mary Lou Davis of Georgia, Ruth Burleson of Texas, and Della Jones of Washington State. Thirty years later Lucia Riehlman of New York would report that the 80th Congress Wives Club still got together. By the 81st House, some had branched out. Nora Kearns of Pennsylvania in 1950 would report her membership in the French Club, the Spanish-Portuguese Club, and her presidency of the DC League of Republican Women, as well as that of the Congressional Club and the 80th Club.²⁷

Sue Bradley of California would have had much experience with the ritualized calling of the Capital from her many years as the wife of a Naval officer. At the end of the 80th Congress, Ruth Burleson worked to put a positive spin on her DC experience, after opening a talk to a meeting in Texas with an observation

²⁴ 1940 Census schedule, New Haven County, Connecticut. *Abilene Reporter-News*, October 1, 1947. 1950 Census schedule, District of Columbia. *The Philadelphia Inquirer Public Ledger*, November 6, 1944. 1950 Census schedule, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. North Carolina Birth Index. McLeod. *The Bridgeport Post*, December 1, 1947. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 6, 1937.

²⁵ Javits with Steinberg, 114, 120. Marion spelled her name "Marian" later in life. *The New York Times*, March 3, 2017. 1950 Census schedule, Queens County, NY. MyLife.com. *Daily News* (New York), August 6, 1941. *Kingsport News*, June 21, 1957. Smathers, 20.

²⁶ Nixon interview.

²⁷ *Kingsport News*, April 8, 1947. *The Post-Standard*, March 17, 1975. *The Record-Argus*, September 27, 1950.

that “The first thing you notice is the froth.” She noted that wives of junior representatives had to call on the wives of the more senior. “The custom is tiresome to some wives, an outrage to others who simply ignore it. But to me, ringing doorbells has been a source of great joy. I have made many warm friends.” She also mentioned a “glittering” reception at the Mexican embassy. On a WJZ-ABC radio program Francesca Lodge of Connecticut described being the wife of a representative meant “where to be ... where not to be ... when to be ... when not to be ... how to be and how not to be.” “We had to know what days the embassies were receiving, what days the judiciary wives would receive. Then we had to learn the correct way to leave visiting cards and how many you have to leave at the White House. Each season on arriving in Washington everyone has to leave their visiting cards at the White House.” Some years later an interviewer of Roberta Regan of Texas and another congressional spouse would report that the women had put on “their white gloves and furs” and went through “one of the most onerous duties for wives of Washington officials,” leaving “their calling cards once a year on every foreign ambassador, cabinet officer, legislator and Supreme Court justice.” While one idled at the curb the other would turn down the corners of the cards to show they had called in person, ring the doorbell, push the cards through the mail slot, and then they would “merrily roll away without even glimpsing the host.”²⁸

There were, of course, innumerable social opportunities of a rather impersonal kind available. Robert Poage, a member of the House from 1937 to 1979, would write, “If one could stand it, and so desired, he could go somewhere every night and some members do, but they are in the minority and they don’t remain members very long.” “Some of these were pure lobby parties, some were in honor of some public official...”²⁹

Aubee Wheeler of Georgia had never seen Washington before her husband’s election, but some wives were already familiar with DC. Mary Meyer of Kansas had begun her married life in Washington, but that was in 1910. Jeanne Patterson was a Washingtonian, where she met and married James. Mary Albert was working at the Pentagon when she met Carl in 1942. Dorn would not marry until the end of the 80th Congress, but his wife Mildred had worked for *U.S. News* in the capital and, Dorn would later report, had dated John Kennedy then. Jerry Lucas of Texas had been a secretary to a doctor in DC. Wives of men who had worked for Congress were even more experienced. Alfreda Sadlak had married Antoni in 1939 when he was secretary to Rep. Boleslaus Monkiewicz. Ruth and Norris Cotton of New Hampshire were wed in 1927 during his tenure as secretary to Sen. George Moses. Ruth Burleson’s husband Omar spent a year as secretary to Rep. Sam Russell. Jerry Lucas married Wingate during his lengthy tenure on the staff of Rep. Fritz Lanham. Karsten had an even longer run, twelve years, as secretary to Rep. John Cochran, and Opal Osborne wed him two years in.³⁰

Some wrote contemporaneously of their Washington experience. Mary Lou Davis of Georgia was already writing a column for a local paper when James was elected; it soon became “Potomac Pressmeat.” Elizabeth Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania also authored a column from Washington during the 80th Congress. Francesca Lodge, a professional dancer and singer, may have had limited previous experience with DC, but had had much with New York, Hollywood, and Europe. Her presence in the Capital brought a number of stories in the press, all of which were fascinated by the fact that she actually made daily runs for her

²⁸ *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 7, 1948. *The Bridgeport Post*, September 22, 1947. *Waco Tribune-Herald*, March 29, 1953.

²⁹ Poage, 85.

³⁰ *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 21, 1946. *The Times Dispatch*, December 2, 1909. *Naugatuck Daily News*, September 12, 1952. *CQWR*, December 25, 1970, 3073-4. Dorn and Derks, 69. *Denton Record-Chronicle*, January 5, 1947. *Hood County News-Tablet*, May 16, 1946.

fitness, a practice uncommon, particularly for women, in the 1940s. She also led an exercise or dance class for congressional wives.³¹

The well-established Congressional Club taught the wives of new members the formal rules of how one made and received house calls and the precedence of dinner seating. The Club also held its major soirees – to welcome new members of Congress, to honor the vice president and his wife, to honor the chief justice and his wife, and so on. It would have been the rare wife who did not participate, not only for her own entertainment but for the socio-political advancement of her husband. Nora Kearns of Pennsylvania, Christine Jones of Alabama, Eva Tollefson of Washington, Lynn Hardy of Virginia, and Ann Evins of Tennessee eventually would achieve vice-presidential status, while Mary Lou Davis of Georgia and Ruth Burleson of Texas would be elected president.³²

The wives were not necessarily constrained by formal clubs and societies, calling cards, and embassy parties. Freddie Teague of Texas gave her own luncheon at the Shoreham Hotel on June 12, 1947, for a number of congressional wives. But then Ruth Burleson, Jerry Lucas, Ruby Lee Wilson, all of Texas, Ann Evins of Tennessee, and others left early for the British Embassy's garden party.³³

Wives with small children usually had motherly duties to occupy them. Isabel Meade led the field, having six children ranging from seven to thirteen in age. She is recorded as accompanying Hugh in Washington, but it is likely the children remained at or near home fifty miles away in Baltimore. Florence Nodar of Queens accompanied her husband to Washington, presumably with the twins who had been born on November 17, 1946. Elizabeth MacKinnon of Minnesota not only had a daughter who turned one on October 7, 1947, but delivered a son in Washington on March 21, 1948. Alfreda Sadlak's second child came on April 1, 1947, in DC. Marjorie Russell birthed her fifth and last child on November 18, 1947, in Washington. Jennie Youngblood delivered her fourth daughter and the third for husband Harold on February 14, 1948, in Washington. Philadelphian Florence Sarbacher's second of three arrived in Washington on March 5, 1948. Pat Nixon delivered Julie on July 5, 1948, in Washington; Tricia was 28 months at the time. Elizabeth Mitchell of Indiana came to Washington with her husband, but gave birth to her first child on October 4, 1947, in Evansville. The 109 members of the Class had at least 121 children of school age or younger at the start of the 80th Congress and added 13 during it.³⁴

Cokie Roberts would describe family life in the Capital as somewhat limited, with the only organized activities being by state delegations and state societies. But she also recounted a nonpartisan congeniality among the families. "People played bridge. People did get to know each other. And there was that sense

³¹ *The Evening Independent*, April 14, 1947. *Newport Daily News*, January 27, 1950. *The Evening Sentinel*, October 3, 1967. *The Bridgeport Telegram*, September 16, 1947. *The Bridgeport Post*, September 16, 1947. *Tucson Daily Citizen*, March 5, 1948.

³² *The Odessa American*, January 8, 1956. Lindy Boggs with Hatch offered a synopsis of the social whirl, 78-82. Congressional Club activity is included in the *Congressional Directory*.

³³ *Corsicana Daily Sun*, June 18, 1947.

³⁴ 1950 Census schedule, Baltimore, Maryland. *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, October 8, 1946. *The Minneapolis Star*, March 22, 1948. *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 20, 1947. *The State Journal*, February 15, 1948. 1950 Census schedule, Wayne County, Michigan. *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 11, 1991. MyLife.com. "Pat Nixon Biography," Nixon Presidential Library. *The Indianapolis Star*, October 6, 1947. E.A. Mitchell had a son from a previous marriage. Census 1940 schedule, Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Others who had childbirths during the 80th Congress were Corinne Abbitt, Mary Albert, Janis Battle, and Marian Javits. *The Progress-Index*, May 30, 1966.

that after the sun goes down, we're all friends. You'd see each other at church; you'd see each other at school events."

Blatnik years later would recount becoming very close early on with John Kennedy, Sidney Yates (D IL), Melvin Price (D IL), John Carroll of Colorado, and Donohue, "young bachelors" in his description, getting together "many an evening." Carroll, however, had been married since 1923 and his wife and adult daughter were reported as accompanying him to Washington. All Northern Democrats, this was hardly an example of reaching across the partisan or regional divide. Neither was the fact that Frank Wilson and Morris formed half of a Democratic barbershop quartet.³⁵

One nexus of contact was the congressional baseball game. Begun in 1909, it had evolved into a fundraiser for charities. Among the Class of '46, Dorn was to play on July 12 at Griffith Field, James Scoblick suited up, and Albert was an umpire. For comic effect, Albert wore a six-shooter while the other ump, who was a foot taller, carried a shotgun. Jackson had two RBIs in the seventh inning. Don Wheeler pitched four innings and struck out five. Wheeler would pitch until 1954, being largely responsible for six consecutive Democratic victories. O'Neill would call him "Fireball Wheeler." Republican Caleb Boggs of Delaware also pitched. In his talk to a civic club on August 12, Boggs claimed he hit safely on his at-bats until the 5th inning when Wheeler walked him. A clothes washer was put up by a Washington business to be awarded to the first player who hit a home run. Glenn Davis of Wisconsin won it in the seventh inning, hitting it over the head of an outfielder. A newspaper reported, "Davis puffed around third as if he had that washer tied to one foot, but he made it." He scored three runs and with that the Republicans took the game, 16-13, which was then called on account of lightning.³⁶

There were a lot of uninvited guests in Washington, observed Cokie Roberts. "It was a very big deal to get here. So when constituents would come up, they would come to the house for dinner, or sometimes they would stay with us. ... [W]e'd show them around, and often it was I who showed them around. I knew the place well, and I didn't mind." It certainly was not only daughters who had the duty. Harriet Bricker told "sister-members of the 80th Congress Club that one way they can serve their husbands' constituents best is to show them the sights with the prowess of a professional guide." So, they studied the sights. In February 1948 Charline Harvey reported she and Ralph wore out two maps taking folks who came from Indiana to see the highlights around Washington, and Harvey had only come to the House in November 1947.³⁷

Lynn Hardy Yeakel, daughter of Porter of Virginia, would write, "Growing up as the daughter of a congressman had its privileges – attending the same school as President Dwight Eisenhower's grandchildren and being excused from class so I could join my father in a visit with Queen Elizabeth are two examples. But it also had its downside – the constant threat of unwanted attention and bad publicity because of his public life." The child of another member of the Class made very similar comments in a confidential interview. But then Charles Deane could take his young son to the House Dining Room to lunch with two players from the Washington Senators and then to the game.³⁸

³⁵ Blatnik interview, 1. "Biographical / Historical," Carroll Papers. *Marshall News Messenger*, March 21, 1948.

³⁶ *The Index-Journal*, July 12, 1947. *The Boston Daily Globe*, July 13, 1947. *Waukesha Daily Freeman*, July 14, 1947. *Monroe Evening Times*, July 14, 1947. *Fort Pierce News-Tribune*, January 27, 1955. O'Neill with Novak, 145. *Wilmington Morning News*, July 12, August 14, 1947.

³⁷ *Kingsport News*, April 8, 1947. *Rushville Republican*, February 2, 1948.

³⁸ Yeakel, 25. Deane, 113.

For families whose political careers rested on rootedness, the seasonal migration between Washington and the home district produced a split existence of family, friends, and institutions. The longer one would hold office in the Capital the greater would be the split. The Burleson's sold their house in Texas "because we were in Washington so much."³⁹

For the members themselves, well, the male members, that is the white male members, the Capitol itself provided ample activities other than work. There were exercise and dining facilities on site and staff to take care of pesky tasks. There were cloak rooms with comfortable chairs and newspapers from home and comradery. For the more senior and their invited guests there were hideaway offices in the building, and the nearby Capitol Hill Liquor Club Store kept two full-time delivery people for the Capitol complex.⁴⁰

Maintaining residences in two locations, one of which seemed expensive to many members, could be a significant drain on family resources. Yet, members received a salary of \$12,500, paid monthly, which for most Americans was beyond their ken. In 1947 only 2.7% of families had incomes over \$10,000. There was also an expense allowance of \$2500, which could be used for personal costs as well; there were other allowances for telegraph, telephone, and office supplies. Travel to and from the home district could add up if many trips were made, since reimbursement was only for one round trip a session. Javits of New York would later write that he would put in days of work on Mondays and Fridays at Javits & Javits, the law firm he headed with his brother, "for we found it difficult to live comfortably on my congressional salary alone."⁴¹

While many members may not have been among the 2.7% before taking their seats, they were accustomed with minimal exceptions, if any, to a standard of living that could be difficult to continue in office, without the necessity of continuing to pursue their pre-election vocations. Many did continue their day jobs, and the fact that congressional sessions did not last the year enabled them to do so. Most were attorneys, 62 of the entire Class. Twenty were in business, three of whom were also attorneys.

Another source of income was the common practice of putting the wife and adult daughters on the office staff for pay. Ruth Burleson, Ruth Cotton, and Janice Battle of Alabama were put on their husband's payrolls right off the bat. Robert McGarvey of Pennsylvania put his daughter Ayleen on paid staff, as did Robert Twyman of Chicago with Tannisse, and Lusk put her son Dolph on. Wheeler hired his sister Rosalind. While not illegal, and wives who had been active in their husbands' political careers were well suited to the work, it nevertheless carried a hint of impropriety, and newspapers would periodically print lists of staff with the same last name as the member.⁴²

There were wealthy members going in other than Kennedy: St. George, Coudert, Scott, Hamilton Jones, Lodge, Morton, Thomas Stanley of Virginia. And there were many who had done well with their careers even if they had not risen to the level of these. But service in Congress did not in itself produce wealth. What it did was offer the perquisites of office – a personal staff that was subject only to the member's whims, an institutional staff charged with facilitating one's work, many who wished to influence the member's professional actions by favors of various sorts, and a host of influential and well-heeled people back home who wanted association, socially and professionally, with a member. Andrew Young,

³⁹ *Abilene Reporter-News*, August 10, 1977.

⁴⁰ West interview (August 31, 2005).

⁴¹ Cotton, 129-30. *Historical Statistics*, Series G 1-15. Javits with Steinberg, 123.

⁴² Schwabe interview. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 17, 1947. *The Austin American*, April 20, 1947. Rosalind M. Wheeler, FindAGrave.com.

who served from Georgia in the 1970s, would say years later that being a congressman was “a really great job.”⁴³

⁴³ Andrew Young, Address at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, January 17, 2012, attended by the author.