

MICHAEL A. JOHNSON
Deputy Assistant Sergeant at Arms

Oral History Interviews
November 8, 16 and December 1, 2006

Senate Historical Office
Washington, DC

Deed of Gift

I, Michael A. Johnson, do hereby give to the Senate Historical Office the tape recordings and transcripts of my interviews on November 8, 16, and December 1, 2006.

I authorize the Senate Historical Office to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their oral history program. I also approve the deposit of the transcripts at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Senate Library, and any other institution which the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Michael A. Johnson

[date]

Accepted on behalf of the
Senate Historical Office by:

Richard A. Baker

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Preface

In the days of the afternoon newspapers, Michael A. Johnson used to leave school on Capitol Hill and head for the nearby Senate Office Building with a stack of the *Washington Evening Star*. Born in Washington on December 6, 1954, he became a regular visitor to the senators' offices throughout the 1960s. Vermont Senator George Aiken and his wife, Lola, took a special interest in him, and they arranged for him to become a Senate page in 1970. He was the second African American to serve as a Republican page (Senator Jacob Javits had appointed the first in 1965). Serving as a page for four years, he spent most of his high school years in the Senate Page School. He took his classes early in the morning and then reported with the other pages to the Senate Chamber, where they ran errands and assisted the senators and staff throughout the day and sometimes well into the evenings. After serving as a floor page, he was promoted to cloakroom page, which provided him a unique perspective on the legislative process that started him on a lifetime of service to the United States Senate.

Furnished with letters of recommendations from senators, and good grades in school, Michael Johnson went on to Cornell University. After he graduated in 1978 he returned to Washington and soon after was hired by the sergeant at arms, Nordy Hoffmann, to work in the Senate's fledgling computer center. Over the years, under a series of sergeants at arms, he worked in various phases of Senate computerization and telecommunications, helping the institution to adjust to new technology and facilitate senators' communications with their constituents and state offices.

In 2000, at the request of Sergeant at Arms James Ziglar, Johnson led a team that prepared the Senate's first Continuity of Operations Plan, which was completed in May 2001. On September 11, 2001, Johnson rushed to the Capitol Police headquarters with the copy of the COOP plan. While Sergeant at Arms Al Lenhardt chose not to implement the plan that day, it provided assistance to many Senate offices weeks later when an anthrax attack closed the Hart Senate Office Building for three months. Johnson's role expanded with the increased concern over security on Capitol Hill and the need for alternative meeting places for the Senate. In 2002, he became the first employee in the Office of Security and Emergency Preparedness, and in 2005 Sergeant at Arms William H. Pickle promoted him to deputy assistant sergeant at arms.

About the Interviewer: Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the City College of New York, he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. His books include *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard University Press, 1980), *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard University Press, 1991), *The Oxford Guide to the United States Government* (Oxford University Press, 2001), and *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps* (Oxford University Press, 2005). He served as president of the Oral History Association and of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), and received OHMAR's Forrest C. Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.

[Picture on the following page: Michael Johnson with Vice President Hubert Humphrey (left) and Minnesota senator Walter Mondale (right).]

