

# INTERVIEW with DAVID F. EMERY

U.S. Representative from Maine's 1st district, 1975 through '82

GREGORSKY to EMERY during the revision process: "The goal is to let this become a web-linked 'tour' of New England through a GOP lens, as well as a conversational House memoir through the interviewee's eyes. And the unstated, i.e. marketing, goal is for Gregorsky to be able to show prospective publishers and the next financial backer that he is engaged in lively and rigorous research."

## (1) Maine Stops Being Reliably Republican

FRANK GREGORSKY: You were born in --

DAVE EMERY: Rockland. It's a small coastal Maine city; the population hasn't changed much in decades -- it's about 8,000 or so.

GREGORSKY: Your earliest political sensation or adventure?

EMERY: It dates back to second grade. Some of my friends came into class wearing campaign buttons, and I wanted to join the fun. Each of the parties had a small campaign office downtown. So three or four of us walked into the Democratic headquarters, and were immediately booted out. And then, when we went into the Republican headquarters, we were given cider and donuts and invited to come back the next day to meet the Governor.

GREGORSKY: [Laughter]

EMERY: So, there's a lesson there somewhere!

As for my serious interest, it probably began in 1960. I would've been 12 years old. [John Reed](#) was Governor. He was running for his first full term. The Democrat who had been elected in the '58 Democratic landslide, Clinton Clausen, had died in office, and John Reed succeeded to the Governorship, having been State Senate president. He was one of the early influences that shaped my political interests, as was Margaret Chase Smith, who everyone adored. I got to know both of them.

GREGORSKY: In that '58 Democratic sweep, Ed Muskie moved from the Governor's chair to the U.S. Senate. What kind of man was he? All my life I've heard him described as "thoughtful" and also hot-tempered. I suppose a fellow can be both, in a day or even an hour, but -- what terms would you use?

EMERY: Ed was, by personality, the quintessential Yankee. I think that's one of the reasons he was able to break through the rock-solid hold that the Republicans had on Maine in the 1950s. Although he built a liberal Senate voting record, his demeanor was mainstream and reassuring. He was highly regarded throughout the state as someone who worked hard and could be trusted to do what he thought was right.

He was also one of the first to develop environmental policy as a political cause, which played well at home. Politically speaking, he was the single most important reason the Democratic Party grew into its current preeminent position in Maine -- Ed Muskie gave them a credible face.

GREGORSKY: For most of your time in the House, you were delegation-mates.

EMERY: He and I got along very well -- in part, I think, because we were never on a political trajectory that would be likely to collide.

But Ed didn't necessarily get along well with everyone else. Very early in his Senate career, he crossed swords with Lyndon Johnson while Johnson was Majority Leader -- I don't remember the reason -- but they were never close thereafter. (This was all before my time, obviously.)

He and Independent Governor Jim Longley [in office during 1975-78] openly detested each other. On many occasions -- delegation meetings, held when the Governor was in town -- tempers would flare nearly to the boiling point. More than once, voices were raised and the language (mostly Ed's) got a bit salty.

Yes, Ed was ill-tempered at times, but I think it was mostly an act designed to intimidate his adversaries. And I have seen it work effectively -- for example, at a delegation meeting with Air Force brass over the proposed closure of Loring Air Force Base located in Limestone, Maine. He put on quite a show -- fist on the table; acerbic remarks; pointed questions; a shake of the head -- and one "Christ Almighty, Colonel! Isn't there anyone in the Air Force who does his homework?" I'll never forget it.

GREGORSKY: What a shock to Maine politics it must've been when he agreed to take the Secretary of State post, in what looked to be a doomed Carter-Mondale Administration, after Cyrus Vance walked out [in April of 1980].

EMERY: Truly a huge surprise, and it affected me directly. At the time, I was a member of the House Armed Services Committee. An early-morning call said there would be a meeting of the Committee to inform us about "an event" that had taken place in Iran overnight at a place thereafter referred to as "Desert One." We were told of the disastrous hostage rescue attempt and saw photos of destroyed aircraft that had collided at the landing site. Committee members were stunned.

Over the next couple of weeks, it became apparent that it was an ill-conceived and poorly coordinated plan that never had a reasonable chance to succeed as it was structured.

I was sitting on the House Floor when I heard that Muskie was President Carter's choice to replace Vance as Secretary of State. Within a space of five minutes, I was descended upon by staff, press and several Senators wanting to know when the vacancy would likely be filled, who would be appointed, and was I interested in the vacant Senate seat.

As the matter sorted itself out over the next several days, two candidates emerged who expressed interest in the appointment -- it would be a Democrat, since the Governor was Democrat Joe Brennan. They were former Governor Ken Curtis and George Mitchell. As we know, Mitchell was appointed. Under Maine law, due to the timing of the vacancy, it happened that Mitchell would not have to face an election until 1982, rather than run that fall to complete Muskie's unexpired term.

Had the vacancy occurred some 18 days earlier (as I recall), Mitchell's election campaign would have coincided with the [November 1980] Reagan landslide. I was at the height of my political popularity at the time, and would almost certainly have beaten him. At that point, Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee attorneys reviewed both state and federal law to see if there was a case to be made that the delayed election, under Maine law, was unconstitutional.

The conclusion was that there was, in fact, a case to be made, but the odds of success were judged as only one chance in three. It was my call: Bring the case or not? I thought about it, and decided that since I had already filed for re-election [to the House], it would look too ambitious and opportunistic to push the issue, possibly jeopardizing my re-election without any reasonable chance of success. That fall, I was re-elected with 68.4%.

GREGORSKY: One question about Maine's ethnic mix. The 1976 *Almanac of American Politics* said: "Fully one out of seven people here grew up speaking French." True?

EMERY: It is true. Not so much now as it was, but there's a long history here. All of the Franco-American French speakers were originally Canadian French who immigrated to work in the textile mills. So, from about the 1880s on, there was a tradition of the French settling in places like Biddeford and Sanford and Lewiston where they would be the mill workers; and consequently they became Catholic, French, blue-collar -- and unionized at some point -- Democrats. On the other side of the river lived the Protestant Republican businessman mill-owner.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: That led to the community pairings like Biddeford and Saco -- one was the Franco-American community where the workers lived, the other was the home of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant mill-owner. Lewiston and Auburn, the same way. Over the years a lot of that has blurred. But there are still communities such as Biddeford, Lewiston and Sanford; Millinocket and Rumford; and all along the St. John Valley, the northern border of the state -- that are heavily Franco-American. To this day, some mainly speak French, or are bilingual.

As for percentages? Generally, 15 or 16% of the state is of Franco-American heritage; but I think, as with any ethnic group, there are many fewer now than in decades past that are truly bilingual. It's a rich cultural heritage and they are very proud of it.

## **(2) Emery versus Kyros, in an Extreme Year**

GREGORSKY: So, it comes time to get out of high school. Your parents are looking to you to pick a major, if not an actual career. What kind of collective thought-process is going on in the Emery household?

EMERY: I've always been a science and engineering guy, so I looked at engineering schools that were within my family's means; we were a typical Maine middle-class family, not rolling in dough. So I went to a small and very highly regarded engineering school -- [Worcester Polytechnic Institute](#), in Worcester, Massachusetts -- and got a degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

I've always had a number of interests -- engineering and science being one, politics and government being another, Red Sox baseball being a third [chuckling], astronomy, and so forth. But when it came time to choose a career, engineering seemed obvious. I had a room in the house with all kinds of electronic junk.

GREGORSKY: Are we talking about hi-fi equipment? Ham radio? What was the hobby?

EMERY: I'd get old TVs and radios and take 'em apart. I made test equipment. It was not a case of collecting and playing stereo equipment, it was designing and building and fixing electrical apparatus.

During 1971-74, Emery represented Rockland in the Maine House of Representatives. He was the second youngest member in his freshman term there, just as he'd be the second youngest member of the federal House in 1975. Winning his first election at age 22 was a case of working at the radio station managed by the incumbent. "So, when Paul decided to run for the State Senate, the vacancy coincided with my graduation." But the pay was very low -- \$2,500 for the two years "plus some paltry expense reimbursements" -- and annual sessions not even half the year...

EMERY: I worked as a part-time engineer and did a number of electronics projects. I also worked part-time for a local funeral director. After two terms in the legislature, it was clear that this would not do for the long term. So I made the decision to run for higher office. It's a decision you can only make at the age of 25 when you have no wife, no bills, no longstanding obligations, and -- who knows what might happen? At least I would never be able to think, "Well, you didn't dare to try it."

GREGORSKY: The Congressman you defeated, he had been elected in '66, and the '76 *Almanac* says only this: "Apparently Kyros's abrasive personality had irritated enough of his constituents to allow the energetic young Republican [Emery] to win an upset victory in this Democratic year. As a member of the minority party in a House increasingly dominated by the Democratic caucus, Emery is not likely to play a particularly important legislative role, but his achievement in winning the seat at all suggests that he will be a strong candidate in future years."

EMERY: Peter Kyros was a very bright individual. He had a law degree, and was also a graduate of MIT, as I recall. His problem was that he could be a little arrogant. I'm trying to be tactful here, since this is for a book, but he got himself into situations where his personal deportment [cost him support]. You'd hear people say, "Well, Peter's a smart guy, and he works hard -- but I don't like him very much."

And in 1974, coming off the Watergate travails, incumbency itself was not a good thing. Running for a fifth term in Congress, Peter suffered [from the comparison] to this new, wet-behind-the-ears, fresh-looking kid from Rockland who was saying the right things and seemed earnest. That helped me immeasurably.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: The other factor [adding to the wild-card nature of the race for Congress] was a [fragmented race for Governor](#). Jim Erwin, a very close friend of mine, was the Republican candidate. George Mitchell was the Democratic candidate. And [Jim Longley](#) -- a businessman from Lewiston -- was running as an Independent. Longley attracted a great many people who would have ordinarily supported Jim Erwin -- it was partly due to that Maine independent streak, a widespread desire to throw all the bums out, and a reaction against Republicans.

It turned out to be a perfect storm. Longley was elected Governor, I was able to defeat Peter Kyros by a razor-thin margin, and the Republicans lost control of the Maine House for the first time since -- what -- 1912, I guess. And 36 years after that '74 earthquake, we still haven't regained it.

James B. Longley (Ind)	142,464 (40%)
George J. Mitchell (D)	132,219 (37%)
James S. Erwin (R)	84,176 (23%)

David F. Emery	94,203	(50.2%)	Expenditures	\$68,040
Peter N. Kyros	93,524	(49.8%)	Expenditures	\$68,094

Insert by Emery: The numbers above were the final results reported to the Secretary of State from all precincts following the election. They were the basis of the recount. The actual recount results (and, by agreement of the recount attorneys, not reflected in the official records) were:

Emery	94,737	50.11%	(Margin of 432 votes)
Kyros	94,305	49.89%	
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TOTAL	189,042		

GREGORSKY: And did Peter know you were on his tail? What was his attitude during the campaign?

EMERY: I think he had absolutely no idea that I was anywhere near him, until the votes were counted. As a matter of fact, during the fall I had concocted a way to take public-opinion surveys. (I asked friends and volunteers to make phone calls in a statistically valid way.) During most of September and October, we were able to do nightly tracking, and it was very consistent -- I was behind by 25 to 30 points. It was 60-35, or 55-25, or something like that.

About the second week of October, the undecided jumped way up, I went down a little bit, and Kyros went down a lot more. We knew something was going on. From that point on, I began to gain on him.

The Monday night before the election, I had done a district-wide tour of small events. One of my volunteers came to me with the last poll of the campaign and he said we were ahead by a half a point, with some 20 or 25% still undecided. When a newsman at the state House asked "How ya gonna do?," I was able to tell him: "Well, I've seen a survey that says I'm ahead by half a point." He looked at me and rolled his eyes [laughter].

PETER KYROS      The MAINE HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

### **(3) "The '74 election results led to shellshock"**

GREGORSKY: As the second youngest House Member -- 26 at the swearing-in -- what kind of things did you do to earn the trust and backing of so many senior colleagues?

EMERY: [Pause] It's important to listen to what people say and respect their institutional judgment. I had done that in the Maine legislature. Contrast that with some of the Democratic freshmen who got elected in '74 -- I mean, they were full of "piss and vinegar." They brashly challenged committee chairmen and sought substantial changes in their party's procedures and rules, and then in public policy. That set up a "them against us" scenario with some of their older Members.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: I just saw that as counterproductive. I figured right off that if I wanted to have a good reputation in the Conference, and have my ideas be taken seriously, I had to do a lot of listening and not a lot of shouting. That was one of the key realizations, and I think it is correct to this day.

GREGORSKY: Republicans today claim Richard Nixon was "smart," but in fact his Administration pursued reckless economic and regulatory policies. And he was driven from the Presidency in the middle of your first [federal] campaign. It wasn't simply Watergate and the aftermath, but 12% inflation, 10% mortgage rates, much higher gas prices -- it all led to freakish electoral outcomes around the country. Newt Gingrich came within two points of knockin' off John Flynt in Georgia; Bill Clinton came within four points of defeating John Paul Hammerschmidt in Arkansas. But our focus is the GOP. Like flowers growing in the desert, the people who took [Democratic] seats on our side in '74 -- Larry Pressler in South Dakota, or [Gary Myers](#) in Pittsburgh -- had to run innovative races. So tell me about that small band of Republicans who trooped into town right after the disastrous elections of November 1974.

EMERY: We were an interesting group! The Republican freshmen either ran unique races under unique circumstances -- mine certainly was, Gary Myers' certainly was -- or they were super organizers like [Bob Kasten](#) of Wisconsin. And then there were cases like Henry Hyde and Chuck Grassley, coming from strong Republican districts.

GREGORSKY: So who was freshman-class president?

EMERY: I want to say it was [Dick Schulze](#), but -- I'm not certain; I don't remember. Organizing the Class didn't seem important. I can't recall our doing anything that was substantially set apart from the rest of the Republican Conference. In those days we could meet in a phone booth -- we were down to 145 Members and pretty well devastated. The '74 election results led to shellshock.

GREGORSKY: Right.

EMERY: During that first term, I have to say, there was kind of a Republican malaise. We were trying to figure out how to survive, as a party, and most of the focus was on

individuals surviving in their districts as opposed to marching forward with a unified agenda. You know, from the ashes the phoenix rises -- but not necessarily right away.

I can remember being beaten back, time after time after time after time, on votes that we thought were pretty important. All the oil and gas issues. Spending. Various labor bills that they tried to jam through, like the common-situs picketing bill.

GREGORSKY: There was a stimulus bill -- public-works spending plus a \$50 tax rebate -- that President Ford had to swallow toward the end of the 1975 recession.

EMERY: Oh my God, it was awful. One thing after another. We just lost and lost and lost and lost. We were politically decapitated. We had no power, we had no authority, and virtually no hope of having a major impact on legislation.

And, under those circumstances, a party can go one of two ways. It can fragment to where everyone is out for him- or herself and tries to find "deals" that allow political survival; or you pull together and circle the wagons and figure out a way to make the best "common defense" that you can.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: And I think my first term was really neither one! Everyone on our side was kind of flailing around trying to figure out "where do we go next? And is it going to be worse in two years?" *And how will we get out of this hole?*

GREGORSKY: During your first term I was working in a factory in Texas, relying on *National Review* and *Human Events*, and I remember President Ford campaigning against Jimmy Carter touting his "66 vetoes." I asked Bill Frenzel about that and he said: "[T]hey're fun to talk about and they were a good morale-booster... But here's what mostly happened: Democrats would pass an Appropriations bill with a zillion dollars in it; Ford would veto it, and we'd support the veto; and 10 days later they'd pass a bill with a zillion less \$10 in it. So he saved a few bucks, but it wasn't a big deal." Still, didn't the repeating drive to come together to support a Republican White House on those vetoes -- was that any kind of a unifying point during '75-76?

EMERY: Well -- it should've been. But Ford was a little too timid in my opinion.

And [Bill Frenzel](#) is right. If we had decided -- 145 of us with the President -- to make an intellectual stand on some of the major spending legislation -- and I don't mean pick on Social Security, but go after things like the [CETA program](#) that (I thought) was quite a waste of money -- we would've definitely lost some Republican votes. But we would've gained more on the Democratic side from the more conservative members to sustain a good many of those vetoes.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

EMERY: But we didn't do it that way, and that was the President's call. He was a little too timid, and frankly the Conference may have been a little too timid as well. We had not developed a cohesive strategy going forward, but were mostly in the hand-wringing and survival mode.

#### **(4) From John Anderson to Jack Kemp**

GREGORSKY: Congressman John Anderson ran an Independent race for President in 1980, and by 1984 he wanted Walter Mondale to oust Ronald Reagan; so those of us who came to Washington around that time found it hard to believe he had survived for three or four terms as chairman of the House Republican Conference.

EMERY: In my early days, I was very fond of John. He was a rock; he was very strong. But that was before he "drank the Kool-Aid" and became enamored with certain left-of-center ideas. Early on, he was a very effective Conference chairman. He was always someone I could go to for "on the ground" advice -- not necessarily on issues as much as it was on how to get things done and how to deal with this Member or that Member or the process generally.

GREGORSKY: That's fascinating, because, you know, I would see Anderson on TV and it was as if he was speaking from a pulpit. That's why I ask his former colleagues: *What was he like off camera? Could you sit down and have a beer with him?* Did he take you off to the side, put his arm around your shoulder and say "here's what I think you need to do"? I mean -- was he "genuine" at that level?

EMERY: Well, I asked him -- I didn't wait for him to come to me --

GREGORSKY: [Laughter]

ENERGY -- and yeah, he was good to me. I had no problem talking with him. He was very didactic in the sense that he would preach. But, awww, I'm tellin' you, when he was in debate, he could tie the other side up in knots. He knew his facts, and I thought he was an excellent speaker. So he could preach, and he was good at it, and yes, that could "wear thin" on occasion.

But there's a time and place for it, particularly when he would debate procedures of the House, particularly speaking against the closed rules that were used to shut out the minority. Anderson was effective at it.

GREGORSKY: But he was not effective in getting anybody in our Conference to support public financing of congressional campaigns!

EMERY: [Laughter] Fortunately, no! What a horrible idea that is!

GREGORSKY: Jack Kemp came to town four years before you, but by '77 he had the original "10-10-10" Kemp-Roth tax-cut bill and many people believe he was able to change the message of the Republicans nationally -- away from budget-balance and tight management to "hope and opportunity," help for minorities running small businesses, etc. How important was Kempian economics by '77-78?

EMERY: Oh, I think it was critical. Kemp was one of three or four people who were the intellectual underpinnings of the Republican Party in those days. His plan was well thought-out, albeit controversial among some liberal economists. Jack opened up the whole capital-formation argument. He was aggressive in presenting his message in debate with the other side -- pressing it forward with a variety of audiences and making it intellectually cogent. And it did change the message.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: The other thing about Jack was that he was genuinely a nice guy! He was someone people liked. They could appreciate the fact that he had been a professional football player, and also he had a unique way of working with liberals, minorities, and people who didn't necessarily warm up to Republicans. He opened up a number of doors. He got us past a total reliance on white, middle-class, small business people. He opened up a philosophical and political door to people who are not Republicans in the old-time sense.

## **(5) Not to Completely Ignore the Majority Party**

GREGORSKY: For starters, your committees were --

EMERY: Science and Technology, and Merchant Marine and Fisheries. And then, two years later, I dropped Science and Technology, and went on Armed Services, and stayed there for the remainder of my time in Congress.

GREGORSKY: Was it hard to get Merchant Marine and Fisheries?

EMERY: No, it wasn't. And that was a tremendous committee for me, being from a coastal district. Later on, the controversy over the Panama Canal and various environmental issues were all before Merchant Marine -- I enjoyed every second I ever spent on that committee.

GREGORSKY: Who did you listen to and respect on the other side?

EMERY: Quite a few, for different reasons. I really got to know [Mo Udall](#). We disagreed on a lot of things, but I found him to be very witty, intelligent, engaging. He never took himself too seriously. When there were issues raised with energy, water, and some of the Western issues, I very often talked with Mo. I liked him very much, and I know other Republicans did too.

Another was [Gerry Studds](#)! We were both on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, and found ourselves fighting the same battles at the same time -- for the 200-mile limit bill, and all sorts of things unique to New England.

The other comment about Gerry -- he was a superb chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union. A couple of guys -- Gerry being one, [Bill Natcher](#) being the other -- could handle the Committee beautifully. You just knew it was going to be a smooth operation. Plus Gerry had that fabulous, cultured speaking voice, which came right out of Central Casting.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: Now, Gerry got into trouble and was disciplined by the House, and I'd just underscore that I never knew Gerry socially, but we did work together effectively in the House, particularly on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee.

[Mike McCormack](#) from Washington was another one. At that time in the House, very few of us had any background in science or engineering. Mike was one, I was another with my "Double E" [Electrical Engineering] degree, and there were a couple of physicians. But you could count the number of Members with technical backgrounds with the fingers of one hand. As it turned out, Mike was very knowledgeable about nuclear technology and nuclear waste-processing, since he represented the Hanford area in the state of Washington, as you'll recall.

GREGORSKY: Yep.

EMERY: So whenever he spoke on technology matters, I generally listened to him, and he was mostly "right" from my technical perspective.

I'd also name two Members from Armed Services -- Sam Stratton and [Sonny Montgomery](#). Sam was a very strong pro-defense Democrat from Schenectady, New York. Montgomery was the quintessential Southern gentleman, but also pre-eminent in dealing with veterans issues as well as defense issues.

GREGORSKY: That's an excellent answer. It shows you being able to connect with all kinds of political people on different levels.

## **(6) Organizing Victories in the 97th Congress**

GREGORSKY: One of a whole set of landmark Leadership races at the end of 1980 was Trent Lott versus Bud Shuster for House GOP Whip. What are you doing during this critical period?

EMERY: Most of my energy that year was focused on helping Trent Lott. He and I had become good friends. We had similar views on fisheries and especially defense issues -- and I just liked Trent. I've always liked him and always supported him. When he decided to run for Whip, it was a no-brainer. So I lobbied for Trent and spent quite a bit of time and energy helping him secure the Leadership post; and, when he won, he appointed me as the Chief Deputy Whip. It was both challenging and taxing, but I enjoyed it very much.

GREGORSKY: I believe Trent is the only person in American history to serve as Whip in both chambers, an incredible statistic.

EMERY: It really is, isn't it?

GREGORSKY: For people who cover legislatures, you say "Whip" and, going back to the British House of Commons 300 years ago, a definition is automatic. Try to explain it to ordinary people, and they can get the basic mission, but the drama and tactics are lost. Give some vignettes or kind of a rich sketch of what the Whip, or in your case the Chief Deputy Whip, tends to be doing day to day, week to week.

EMERY: Well, my principal responsibility with Trent Lott was to count votes. There are a couple of fundamental functions. One is to present the Conference position, or the President's position, as the case was, and "whip" the Members into shape -- that is, convince them to support our position. The other function is to listen -- because you have to find out what bugs people. Do they have ideas? Are they feeling left out of the process? That two-way communication was critical.

Getting back to the vote tracking system we set up, I brought a fellow down from Maine, who I had known for some time. A genius at computer programming, he helped set up a Republican computer analysis system and he wrote our software. We had our own program and our own way of keeping track of votes, so we could monitor the positions of our members on the various issues as they came to a vote.

GREGORSKY: He was on your staff? Or was he on the Leadership staff?

EMERY: As I recall, he was paid as a consultant to the Conference.

Trent really gave me the responsibility to set that up and it was used for Gramm-Latta, the nuclear freeze, the Conable-Hance tax-reduction bill, and on many other things where the votes were contentious. The Deputy Whips and Regional Whips would speak to everyone on our side and make note of their commitments, or lack thereof; Tommy Loeffler of Texas was very good about going over to the Democratic side and finding out what the Boll Weevil Democrats were up to. We collected all of that information and put into our database, which allowed us to focus our "whip" energies where it would do us the most good.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: We were also able to approach the Gypsy Moths, the Northeastern moderate Republicans, and I was very often used as the liaison with that group. But at the end of the day, we usually knew within a couple of votes what was going to happen. Our computer tracking system was immensely helpful in enabling us to target our internal lobbying activities.

Functionally -- and I don't think this is too much of a stretch -- we had control of the House of Representatives during the 97th Congress, although we had no committee chairmen and we didn't have the Speakership.

GREGORSKY: Passage of Gramm-Latta in late June '81, and passage of Conable-Hance in late July (which became the Economic Recovery Tax Act), were the two critical votes to put "Reaganomics" into law.

EMERY: Particularly with Conable-Hance, it was a circus. For example, I remember going back and forth, spinning in circles, over a wood-stove tax credit. We thought we might induce Jim Jeffords vote with us. I understood that, living in New England, where wood stoves have been popular for many years. There was also this boutique group of environmentalists out there that thought that this idea was just great.

GREGORSKY: [Laughter]

EMERY: And Jim said: "Well, you know that's really attractive, but I still don't think I can vote for the bill, because it has too much other stuff in it I can't stomach." So I went back and reported that to OMB Director David Stockman and he said, "Well I didn't want to put the wood stove tax credit in the bill anyway!" It just went on and on and on.

GREGORSKY: And that's because Ways & Means chair Rostenkowski at that point -- having lost on the budget cuts, the Dems really wanted to win on the tax side. He

kicked off a bidding war when he put up "10 + 5" and detailed business tax breaks against what began, on our side, as a clean "10-10-5" in individual tax-rate cuts with only accelerated depreciation for the business sector. Some liberals gagged, but Rosty, Tip O'Neill and others would add whatever business tax breaks could be defended to siphon off some of Reagan's corporate support.

EMERY: Which was the remarkable thing about June and July of 1981 -- the bidding war was over stuff we generally favored anyway! It was a question of "whose version" did the various groups like more. Some years ago -- and I can't remember who the author is -- a scholar wrote about the machinations involved in passing those two bills: Conable-Hance and Gramm-Latta.

**We found 'em later. Start here --** <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft5d5nb36w/>

## **(7) 1982 -- A Pause in the Republican Revival**

In 1982, Dave Emery opted to give up his House seat to run against appointed Senator George Mitchell -- the same Mitchell who had lost by three points to Jim Longley in '74 and who, during 1989-94, would be Senate Majority Leader. Having won reelection by 68.4% in 1980, and leading Mitchell by 32 points as of early 1981, this did not look to be the long-shot race that history has turned it into...

EMERY: In June of July of 1981, there wasn't a single sign out there to suggest that the race would be anything but do-able. Now of course, any political scientist worth his salt will tell you that when there are major political changes -- of Administration, of philosophy, of Congress -- buyer's remorse sets in.

GREGORSKY: Okay.

EMERY: By early 1982, there were worries about arms control, the budget deficit, unemployment, and worries about all these "right-wing nuts" that had been elected -- if one were to believe the press and the liberal Democrats -- all of these things were swirling around. Plus [our own people] did some things that weren't too helpful. Dave Stockman -- one of the brightest guys I ever served with -- was quoted as classifying ketchup as a vegetable in school lunches. I understand what he was trying to say, but language like that sounds flippant and insensitive. And it hurt a lot of us who were running in more moderate states.

GREGORSKY: A much bigger cloud for New England Republicans during 1982 was a failed move to restrain Social Security COLAs in 1981 -- repudiated 96-to-zero by the Senate -- followed by a recession that topped 1974-75 in severity and had Maine

unemployment up to 10% by the end of '82. Which factor became the bigger roadblock to Dave Emery unseating appointed Senator George Mitchell?

EMERY: Social Security was one of the major issues Mitchell used against me. All you could say in response is: *I won't do that, I didn't vote to do it, it's not what we want to do* -- but the fear usually has more impact than the reassurance.

The unemployment didn't help any. But -- you've got to realize: Maine has had a very unfortunate economic history, for most of my lifetime, actually.

The '50s were pretty good but, come the '60s, the whole economic profile of the Northeast began to change. As the New South opened up, many of the traditional industries -- shoes, paper, textiles -- left Maine. None of them are here now (well, a couple of paper companies are hanging on). The first wave relocated to the South in the early '70s, and the second wave relocated overseas.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

EMERY: So the Maine economy was ebbing away, like the tide going out. Then came the challenge of foreign fishing -- the "factory boats" coming into our traditional fishing grounds -- and national tastes for canned fish (i.e., sardines) began to change, depleting that market. Nothing was there to fill the void.

What I'm saying is that the impact of 10% unemployment as an issue during my Senate race in '82 was not one that was specifically pinned on Reagan or the Republicans or local elected officials. To a greater degree, it was there as a chronic problem that no one had solved.

But the threat of taking Social Security payments away, or cutting back the social safety net -- those things were ripe for the Democrats to whip into a frenzy. And their response was to promise more and more welfare, unemployment benefits, heating-oil subsidies, subsidized public-sector jobs -- and, of course, to blame Republicans for not voting for all of that stuff.

The story continues: For an [audio](#) sidebar covering Dave Emery's time as Deputy Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1983-89), Newt Gingrich's legacy to the House Republicans and potential role today, and an analysis of the Maine GOP as of mid-2010, [click here...](#)

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## ADDENDUM on an unusual '74 Republican freshman

EMERY: Here's a vignette from the Republican Cloakroom.

Sam Steiger of Arizona used to wear these marvelous snakeskin cowboy boots -- they were really works of art and probably very expensive. So he was sitting there with his legs crossed, eating a sandwich or whatever, and Millicent Fenwick came in and said: "Ohhh Sam, what handsome boots. Whatever are they made of?" And without a blink, Sam looked at her and said: "Endangered species, Millicent."

[Mutual laughter]

Almost everyone around collapsed with laughter and Millicent looked horrified. She was a delightful woman -- but you couldn't think of two people more dissimilar than Sam Steiger and Millicent Fenwick!

GREGORSKY: Hey, that's what makes a majority party, or in that case [what held together] a minority party.

EMERY: You're absolutely right. She came from Bernardsville, New Jersey, as I recall.

GREGORSKY: And Millicent lasted all the way to '82. Not only was she a standout member of that small '74 House GOP freshman group, but she ended up having the exact same period of House service you did.

EMERY: She did, and she also ran for the Senate in 82. She lost in New Jersey and I lost in Maine.

GREGORSKY: No one who relies on conservative talk radio for political insight can appreciate how a broadly based congressional party functions, but I say -- they need to learn.

EMERY: This is a fabulous project, and I look forward to reading the book.

GREGORSKY: Thank you. I'll be in touch, and you do the same.

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