

CHAPTER SIX (pages 93 to 107) of ***ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM***, [first edition](#), as published October 2016 by Exacting Times Books

You Try the Presidency, We'll Take the House

INVERSION — "a reversal of position, order, or relationship" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2004 edition)

Some things are so big they become obvious; and later, after they have grown TOO obvious, political practitioners quit analyzing them. The way they transpired — the surreal interaction of forces — fades into a rear-view horizon. But this chapter's historic innovators — Newt and Bill — knew what they were doing. One had to undo the Republican Party's Electoral College "lock." The other had to sandblast the "castles of incumbency" that House Democrats and big-state redistricting were using to suffocate the GOP in Congress. By 1995, each innovator had achieved his ambition. But few foresaw how locked-in the Gingrich-Clinton "swap" would look in 2015...

by [Frank Gregorsky](#)

www.ExactingEditor.com/Masters-of-Inversion.pdf

1. The Political Terrain Gingrich Vowed to Transform

President Richard Nixon's electoral accomplishments — more on those shortly — were costly. Same for his military cutbacks and defeatist diplomatic agreements with an imperialistic Communist Superpower then known as the U.S.S.R.

In August 1974, Nixon was driven from office by a basket of scandals called Watergate. But the entire Republican Party paid the price for a toxic "Nixonomics" brew of governmental expansion that led to an energy shock, double-digit mortgage rates, a weak dollar, and a progressive income tax — top marginal rate 70% — interacting with inflation in ghastly but initially hard to track ways.

On [Election Day 1974](#), a mere NINE House Republicans held onto their seats with 70% or more of the vote, as against 141 House Democrats who registered the same level of re-election strength — that's ONE-HUNDRED FORTY-ONE with 70% or higher — in a parliamentary body of 435. And 59 of those big winners — including eight in the state of Texas alone — didn't even have a Republican opponent.

As for Senate results, the Democrat majority in the “upper chamber” expanded from 14 to 23. And Governors? Unbelievable. Only 13 states — Alaska, Washington, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Virginia, and the Carolinas — had Republican Governors come January 1975. California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois and Pennsylvania all had Democrat Governors.

That's what [an economically reckless President](#) can do to the political party that nominates, elects, and reelects him.

Yet — this chapter is a feast of ironies — Nixon's rootless decisions helped the GOP by misfiring on so many fronts that the Party was forced to do its own "inversion." By 1982, under Reagan, "Republicanism" meant economic and foreign policies that were pretty much the opposite of Nixon's. (That's its own exciting story but beyond the space constraints of this book. It's a chapter for the 2018 edition of this book.)

President Nixon's first term did make one enduring political contribution. Until Donald Trump in 2016, Nixon was the last Republican nominee to be comfortable with tariff increases and a Law & Order agenda. These and other stances helped him draw nationalist and populist voters — the "Wallace vote" of 1968 along with blue-collar families nationwide — away from the Democrat coalition.

Like his former boss Dwight Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan a dozen years later, Richard Nixon won a second term with a crushing landslide. Unlike the 1950s, though, the South was now strongly GOP at the top of the ballot. In 1976, Jimmy Carter took back every single southern state except for Virginia. In 1980, only home-state Georgia stayed with him.

Throughout the 1980s, Republican standard-bearers enjoyed the now "solid South" along with California, Florida, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

Nothing like that potent sectional mix exists these days. If Republicans lose the 2016 presidential election, it'll be the third successive loss — a negative streak not experienced by the GOP since the 1940s. The Democrat Party experienced one much more recently — with Carter in 1980, Walter Mondale in '84, and Michael Dukakis in '88.

"Three in a row" causes both an inflammation of partisanship and a hunger to do things differently: A higher level of animosity, combined with innovative lunges. For the best set of "proofs," look to our cousins in the United Kingdom.

The British Labour Party made huge changes after losing to the Conservatives in 1979, '83, '87 and '92. Abandoning socialism and pacifism, Tony Blair made friends up and down the long ladder of business. If not for the Iraq War, his tenure as Prime Minister would have been as long as Margaret Thatcher's. Her "Tory" Party during this period went through one Leader and agenda-mix after another.

By 2010 — having lost to Labour in '97, 2001, and 2005 — the Conservatives were driven to an alliance with the Liberal Party, a pact that soon served the Conservatives far better than its much smaller governing partner. The thumping Tory Party triumph in 2015 restored the U.K. Conservatives to their historic position of being the dominant British governing enterprise.

The U.K. Conservatives had, to borrow a durable description from the British group Supertramp, "taken the long way home."

But America, of course, doesn't have a parliamentary system. A critical slice of our electorate — and it isn't that big — is enough to sustain Divided Government in a couple of dozen states and nationally.

2. Bill Clinton and Al Gore "Unlock" the Electoral College

After 1988 and a third straight loss, the Democrats did not want another northeastern liberal. They went with two border-staters — Governor Bill Clinton and Senator Al Gore — offering pro-growth economic policies and credible national-security agendas.

That ticket ousted a President — George Herbert Walker Bush — who had shown no interest in extending Ronald Reagan's buoyant track record. And this November 1992 verdict shattered an electoral-college bias for Republican Presidents dating back 40 years — although no one knew it at the time.

Democrats prevailed in two-thirds of the presidential contests from 1992 through 2012. From 1952 through '88, it had been the other way around — Eisenhower twice, Nixon twice, Reagan twice, and "Bush 41" once. Seven GOP victories to only three for Democrats — one each for Kennedy, Johnson and Carter — and two of those three victors had southern roots. Even better: Four of the seven Republican presidential victories had been achieved with margins of at least 10%, whereas JFK in 1960 and Carter in '76 only squeaked by.

Was there a Consolation Prize for the loss-prone Democrats? You bet, and big-time: FOUR DECADES of Democrat Party control of the U.S. House — from 1955 through '94! — and, during all but six of those 40 years, matching majorities in the Senate.

In the off-years, as long as the President was a Republican — 1958, 1970, 1974, 1982, 1986, and 1990 — Democrats expanded their congressional numbers. Having a GOP executive branch thereby made it impossible for congressional Republicans to come close to winning control of the legislative branch. Any discontent with a President translated into a boost for the other party's congressional team.

And then, in the short space of 1992 through '94, the Democrats' congressional majority disappeared — along with the GOP's electoral-vote hold on the executive branch! Bill Clinton conceptualized, articulated and maneuvered to bring about the latter. Newt Gingrich conceptualized, articulated and maneuvered to bring about the former. Those two **MASTERS of INVERSION** were ready, and they had an unwitting facilitator in the White House.

Newt Gingrich went from agile backbencher to #2 House Republican just two months after George Bush Sr. was sworn in as President. But Bush's 1988 victory over Dukakis had done nothing to enhance GOP House and Senate strength. And Gingrich ended up condemned to serve as party Whip under a President who signed bans on offshore oil drilling and was open to lots more regulation and mandates.

Democrats were happy to oblige. Not surprisingly, economic growth wafted out the window. And yet — the related role of a very small 1991 federal tax increase has been unduly amplified.

In an August 2009 column, lobbyist and former House staffer John Feehery wrote: "George H.W. Bush, at the conclusion of the first Gulf War, saw his popularity ratings hit 91%. But he lost his credibility with the voters when he broke his pledge on 'no new taxes,' and he lost his re-election campaign."

Anti-tax Republicans love to recount it that way, and after saying it for 20 or 25 years they probably think it's accurate. But the historical sequence is other than what the quote implies. The 91% approval rating was notched half a year AFTER the tax betrayal.

Granted, from 91%, there's nowhere to go but down. But even 65% support ought to provide SOME kind of strong political hand to play after a wartime victory that cut oil prices in half and liberated an allied country with fewer than 400 U.S. battle deaths.

So, what in blazes DID happen to national Republican Leadership during 1991 and '92? This book applies history in order to ward off amnesia...

3. First Gulf War Triumph Contrasts with Lack of Action at Home

I asked Dr. [Jeffrey Eisenach](#), Gingrich co-strategist and executive director of GOPAC during 1989-92: "What could Bush have done during '91, in the wake of the Kuwait victory, with a high approval rating, and the tax schism now in the rear-view mirror? And what did you try to get him to do?" He replied:

It was the only line I ever got into a State of the Union address. Bush said: "We changed the world, we can change America" — this was either in '91 or '92. And you ask what we at GOPAC were trying to do with the White House? We were trying to get the President to express some interest in anything having to do with the United States of America! — which I thought would've been a usual qualification for an American President [laughter].

The best book on that depressing stretch from mid-1990 — when Bush agreed to parley with the Congressional Democrats about revenue hikes — to November 1992 is by Charles Kolb — ***WHITE HOUSE DAZE: The Unmaking of Domestic Policy in the Bush Years***. If you are a Republican, and intend to do more than serve time and get your ticket punched in some executive-branch sinecure, [go order Kolb's book right now](#). Read every blasted page. *DAZE* is mordantly marvelous.

In a 2010 interview, I asked its author: "The 91% approval rating was notched several months after the breaking of the tax pledge. Didn't that leave the Bush Team with a new burst of goodwill and the country ready to give him another chance [on domestic initiatives]?"

KOLB: I actually think one of the reasons Bush was not re-elected WAS the Persian Gulf War. I did say that on some of the talk shows during the book-promotion. The response was: "Why would you say that? The Gulf War was his biggest triumph: He moved a half-million men and women halfway around the world, and achieved his goal with hardly any American casualties."

And the answer is that the Persian Gulf War set up the "foil" to what wasn't happening on the domestic side. People are looking at this man who had this tremendous accomplishment in rescuing Kuwait and beating back Saddam Hussein — and then they think: "Wait a minute — what about US? What's happening here at home?" So I argue, now, that the Persian Gulf War created a contrast — with what WASN'T happening on the domestic front.

GREGORSKY: So — the liberation of Kuwait proved that, if he wanted to lead

in a certain place, he could.

KOLB: Yeah!

The other side of this drama is offered by [John Sununu Sr.](#), a keen intellect and zestful partisan who served as Bush 41's chief of staff. Also in 2010, he explained the legislative math as it confronted the incoming Bush Team in January 1989:

GREGORSKY: You're coming in, the President is friends with Ways & Means chair Dan Rostenkowski, and Democratic Whip Thomas Foley would soon replace the untrustworthy Jim Wright as House Speaker. In fact there are decent bipartisan compromises on Contra aid and the federal budget by the middle of '89. Still, you face an impossible situation legislatively [in] dealing with a lopsidedly Democratic House and Senate...

SUNUNU: Well, on the Republican side, in the House in particular, it was not a very unified bunch. We did pluck Dick Cheney out of the Leadership ranks to [be Secretary of Defense], and that movement created perceptions of opportunity amongst the more ambitious Republican House Members. And so they had a lot of internal fluidity, which made it harder for us to deal with.

He is referring to a startling turn of events: (a) Former Texas Senator John Tower's inability to win confirmation as Secretary of Defense (b) opened the door for House GOP Whip Richard Cheney to take that critical post, thereby (c) allowing Newt Gingrich to spring from the restive back benches of the House Republican Conference to #2 — BOOM — on March 22nd, 1989. He was now GOP Whip, reporting to a man — Leader Bob Michel — 20 years his senior.

GREGORSKY: That one act [Bush's selection of Cheney] DID change the entire history of the House Republican Party.

SUNUNU: Yeah, it did, didn't it? And [it was Vice-President Dan] Quayle and myself who came up with that recommendation and made it strongly to President Bush, and how he had to move quickly after the [John] Tower thing. It all came together in a matter of two-three days, if you remember.

GREGORSKY: Yeah, that was great — although we were sorry to lose Dick. He had an enormous reservoir of goodwill among the moderates AND the conservatives.

SUNUNU: Which could have addressed some of the real problems that developed, too, but — you try to do the right thing at the moment and you don't assume people can't fill the loss constructively...

I also asked him about managing to play skillful defense on domestic matters: "The Bush Administration had something like 31 straight vetoes upheld. This was obviously strategy, as opposed to luck."

SUNUNU: We worked hard to have a strong veto-supporting base in the House and the Senate who recognized that this approach gave THEM strength in negotiating legislation with the Democrats. We worked hard to coordinate that strategy with the Republican Leadership.

4. Who WAS that Masked Man? And What Kept Him Going?

Time for a Confession: Most of the people who put together this book more or less "like" politicians. More than your average Republican voter, we understand the pressures they take on, and the daily weirdness they navigate. The '70s psych term "coping mechanisms" does not do justice to the daily grind of holding elective office.

In that light, here's one of the most remarkable, and insightful, passages from 36 interviews of (mostly) former Republican House Members.

I had him down here at the Navy Yard. We had a new shipyard then, and [I tell him]: "Let's go the front gate, the workers are knockin' off" — you know, catch 'em when they're walkin' out the gate. How many times do you have the Vice-President of the United States standing at the gate of the Navy Yard? But he would stand there, with his hand in his pocket [he's demonstrating the pose] — you know, like this. He was [pause] never really comfortable. He was just never really comfortable, and I think that was one of his problems [as a candidate] — he gave the impression that he didn't want the job.

The job in question is Top Dog, #1 Republican, the man who is (pardon the metaphorical license; too many detective shows) handcuffed to the nuclear suitcase. The candidate is George Bush, the year is 1988, and the man doing the recollecting is Tom Hartnett, one of the best storytellers you'll find.

"Tommy" Hartnett got elected to the South Carolina legislature in 1964. In '72 he switched to the GOP and by 1981 was in the federal House representing the delightful city of Charleston. After 1986 he is one of countless peers trying to figure

out "what makes George tick?"

HARTNETT: Very SHY ... and it was not ALOOFness — 'cause he's one of the nicest people you'll ever meet in your life! If you knew George Bush, you'd LOVE him. Now, true, he came from an "elite" family, I guess, or an aristocratic family or whatever you want to call it. But he was NOT an aloof person. He just never seemed to be comfortable. We'd be ridin' in the car. Barbara, she'd be havin' the best time, and she'd be talking and waving to people. Bush would sit there, you know, and [here he laughs] wave out the window — and he just never seemed comfortable with the job. Maybe it was just his personality, I don't know.

When George Herbert Walker Bush leaves us, he'll be commended for completing Freedom's Cold War triumph (including Nicaragua's electoral rejection of the Marxist Sandinistas in 1990); for stopping Iraq's dictator from plunging the Middle East into anarchy; for accepting small tax hikes to get some pretty good domestic spending caps; and for working with Congress to clean up the Savings & Loan mess in a way that preserved FDIC guarantees without causing a deep recession.

And, on one issue that lately defies both ideological and partisan polarities, I personally salute Bush 41 for leading the War on Drugs.

You'll never hear it from legal marijuana's shameless propagandists, but — teen use of that corrosive substance plunged by one-third during the Reagan-Bush Years. And why is that so great? Because it means HUNDREDS of THOUSANDS of middle-aged Americans are in solid shape TODAY because they did not fall into "recreational" drug-use — AS YOUTH — back then.

Some "failed" war! In ***The Conservative's Handbook***, Phil Valentine noted: "The number of Americans over the age of 12 who had used drugs in the previous 30 days plummeted from 14.1% in 1979 to 5.8% in 1992." Legislators who favor a strong economy might take note.

Thirty years later? The entire Pacific Coast is registering drug-use at late-1970s levels. And we await pot barons packing executive-branch task forces, building upon their enticements to naive K-12 administrators and think tanks like Brookings.

The U.S. desperately needs an analytical framework to confirm the long-term socio-economic health and wellness UPSIDE from policies that DETER addiction, because we already know that reducing drug AVAILABILITY naturally and inexorably works against social decay. Legal dope-pushers are far deadlier than banned ones.

For those of us with friends in the Prevention sector and who support our local police and K-12 institutions, here's the bottom line: The only reason this country "loses" battles against drug-use is because more and more users, growers — and lately corporate commercializers — have a shared interest in making VICTORS out of marijuana and other mentally debilitating drugs.

When America pays its final respects to George Herbert Walker Bush, only Bill Bennett, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Maryland Congressman [Andy Harris](#) will express the sentiments I just did. The first President Bush took public health and youth safety very seriously. We ought to give him points for that.

As for government overall? As of 2016, Bush 41 looks pretty much to be in the 1950s Eisenhower tradition: The man did his respectable best with the issues and demands that came his way.

5. November 1990 Ends Realignment Talk, and Gingrich Almost Loses

A couple of months before President Bush agreed to parley with the Democrats on taxes, Bush campaign swamp fox Lee Atwater was diagnosed with a brain tumor. This startling tragedy (although Lee would hold on for one more year) is cited by Tom Hartnett and others as the beginning of the end for President Bush's domestic effectiveness.

During budget talks at Andrews Air Force Base and the onset of a recession not yet made official, his approval rating dipped below 50%. In *The New Republic* dated 10/28/1990, Fred Barnes reported that the President's "cool, decisive style in the Persian Gulf crisis was absent in the budget fight. For the first time there was disarray, vindictiveness, serious backbiting, and fickle behavior at the White House..."

"He was thunderstruck when many of his longtime allies abandoned him on the budget deal — [Henry Hyde](#) of Illinois, Sonny Callahan of Alabama, John Myers of Indiana, Bob Dornan of California. He was forced to make repeated pleas to Bill Archer, the Republican who holds Bush's old House seat in Houston."

Two months earlier, House GOP Whip Gingrich had left the budget negotiations and — with economic antennae as keen as ever — called for a tax REDUCTION. Oil prices were skyrocketing due to Iraq's rapid seizure of Kuwait. Would Saudi Arabia be next?

"Thunderstruck" also covered the Gingrich camp on November 5, 1990. It was election night, and NBC's John Chancellor said: "With 37% of the vote in Georgia's

sixth district, the Whip for the Republican Party — the REBEL of the Republican Party, Newt Gingrich — is about 50-50 with a young fellow named David Worley. And do you know why Mr. Worley is doing so well? He says Newt Gingrich has got too big for his britches; he's become a national politician and he's ignoring the sixth district in Georgia. Fascinating."

David Brinkley, a rare tax-foe among the establishment news corps, added: "It's interesting that everyone who had anything whatsoever to do with this tax bill is SUFFERING from it. Even Newt Gingrich. Everybody who TOUCHED it." That included the putatively cerebral former basketball star, Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey. Despite outspending her by 15-to-one, Bradley came within 3% of losing to future Governor Christine Todd Whitman.

At 12:17 a.m. eastern time on November 6th, Peter Mead of WBZ Radio in Boston reported: "Eight Republican Congressmen ran for the Senate, and it would appear that all of them are gonna go down to defeat." That included Class of '80 stars Claudine Schneider in Rhode Island and Lynn Martin of Illinois, as well as Oregon's Denny Smith, whose original victory you heard recounted in Chapter 2.

Only after 2 a.m. could Atlanta's WSB Radio report that Newt Gingrich's elevation to House GOP Whip would not, after all, end his career:

The AP is declaring Gingrich the winner with 96% of the vote in, and Gingrich ahead by just 1,080 votes. Gingrich had led the opposition to the budget deal worked out between President Bush and Congress, which called for higher taxes. But it was precisely that national stature that Worley used in HIS attack, saying Gingrich ignored the needs of his district.

Interesting fireworks on this election night — yet no earthquake. Stressing the big picture for Congress-watchers, WSB added that "overall, 96% of the incumbents are headed back, with Democrats STRENGTHENING their majority."

One near-death experience doesn't deserve another, but it arrived anyway, in July of 1992. Gingrich had broken a pickup full of picks to get the White House to lead on domestic issues. But, despite the beginnings of an economic recovery, the Bush Crew had an 80% disapproval rating on the handling of matters economic. And Newt Gingrich collected negative dividends by being on the legislative part of that crew.

"Newt Gingrich may go down in history as the greatest hypocrite in politics," declared Matt Glavin of the Georgia Public Policy Institute. In a drastically altered sixth congressional district, he was battling former state Rep. Herman Clark, who

claimed: "Newt is just another Congressman who takes advantage of every perk the system has to offer... Newt says junk mail is bad but mails more junk mail than any other Congressman in this state." (Quotes are from a Ralph Z. Hallow story in the *Washington Times* for July 13th, 1992.)

6. The Striking Parallels — 1991-92 and 2015-16

Friends, if you think these snapshots from a quarter-century ago are quaintly irrelevant, you are dead wrong. If you imagine 2016 has been completely outside contemporary experience, try reliving 1992, month by month...

Populist Japan-basher and border-blocker [Pat Buchanan](#), followed by self-financed independent H. Ross Perot, were doing to the Beltway GOP and donor class what Donald J. Trump would do 24 years later. Not only that, but Jerry Brown, Mayor of Oakland during '92, was making hay on the populist left in ways similar to how Senator Bernie Sanders will later complicate the coronation of Hillary Clinton.

Twitter has its productive uses, but a good history book (and "good" means going light on the ideology) or an insightful biography — aim for one every week — will serve the aspiring officeholder far better.

During 2015 and 2016, GOP voters of varied stripes and temperaments have been appalled at the passivity and lockjaw of senior congressional Republicans. In 1992, the same types of voters felt exactly the same way about virtually the entire George Herbert Walker Bush Administration.

Makes one wonder: Is self-paralysis some kind of cyclical affliction (sort of like global flu epidemics) for the GOP's commanding heights?

Does a Republican presidential nominee or Speaker have to walk into his or her role with unbelievable drive and/or depth to keep pushing back against a stinking Washington Beltway prepared to drain more blood from the productive economy? Should the Nixon and Bush people's encouragement of spending, mandates and lawsuits be recounted, and then trashed, in every GOP candidates' school?

Worthwhile inquiries — although not for tackling in this chapter.

If you'd like a "reform" proposal, though, try this: Let's somehow make it "okay" for senior elected officials to quit. Even the President. Set aside duty. Go ahead and disappoint your donors — as long as it can happen efficiently and smack-dabbingly, rather than on an installment plan.

The real choice is between disappointing your backers for a few weeks — versus

saddening or irritating them for two or more years; the latter happens when a power figure "retires on the job" (a marvelous phrase from Peter Drucker). Choose to be a short-term disappointment! Seriously -- go for the PROMPT exit. Pop the cork for your federal pension, saunter off without shame, and take up something enjoyable.

7. The GOP is About to Be Expelled from the Electoral College

On July 16th, 1992, Bill Clinton took control of a "new" Democrat Party. The very next week, in northwestern Georgia, Newt Gingrich edged Herman Clark by 51 to 49%. In part by outspending Clark seven to one, Newt had dodged a second cannonball. The man's political escape skills are legendary, although I never heard him talk about Harry Houdini.

Weeks before surviving Clark's barrage, Gingrich had publicly given up on President Bush. This was a different form of escape. In a *Washington Times* story by Don Lambro on June 23rd, Gingrich had said: "You clearly see significant leaders in the business community now saying that they believe their economic future is better with Ross Perot." [Perot for President of the United States](#)?!? Yes, exasperated center-right voters seem ready to "gamble on a total outsider about whom they know little. Ross Perot would be an extraordinarily dangerous gamble..."

With a brief war that "worked" — and in fact had been financed mostly by our allies! — and a mild recession now over, why all of this unrest?

The Bush Administration "is not currently providing consistent, clear leadership for change," Gingrich told Don Lambro. Their political team "learned politics 20 years ago [and] I think is not yet focused and has not yet shaped where it wants to go."

Not yet, and not yet. Keep in mind that it's almost three and one-half years after this befuddled President's inauguration.

As Bill Clinton works relentlessly to restore his party to executive-branch control, one prominent GOPer can acknowledge what's coming, and why. In mid-1992, he offers more than grudging praise for a partisan foe. Bill Clinton is, according to Newt Gingrich, "the most consistently determined, persistent, professional politician I have ever seen, with the exception of Richard Nixon. He is in the same tradition as Nixon. Nothing stops him, nothing slows him down."

Depending on which end of Pennsylvania Avenue you believe most important, this Era we've just relived is either cruel — or it's magical.

Having survived his association with the Bush 41 version of Republicanism, Gingrich

is fortunate that he couldn't get those folks to take 1992 seriously. Their inaction lets Bill Clinton — a man able to make unfunded mandates sound almost entrepreneurial — run away with the reformist theme to get the country past its early-'90s slump.

In their own unfolding historic ways, therefore, both Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton NEEDED George Bush Sr. to be in the Oval Office for JUST the one term...

- Without Bill Clinton's eviction of a spent Bush Administration, Gingrich's decades-long drive to give the GOP a House majority would never have reached the finish line. (The completion of this Great Inversion awaits November 1994.)
- In Clinton's case, his general-election rival let the air out of the Eisenhower-Nixon-Reagan electoral-college majority. Eisenach recollects: "At the end of '92, it was just a sense of DEATH. GOPAC had its charter-group meeting in Williamsburg [amidst] despair and depression... From top to bottom, the Republican base had given up — the base was just sick of George Bush."

I'm afraid GOP loyalists who still blame Ross Perot for his '92 campaign miss the validity of Jeff Eisenach's statement. They are much like the consultants of 2016 seething at Donald J. Trump -- while making excuses for House and Senate GOPers who fund Obama's importation of Mysterious Syrians, refuse to impeach his IRS chief, and take other pains to dodge poison arrows from *The Washington Post*.

Jeff Eisenach added: "GOPAC had gone through the year spending a lot of money on the assumption that [1992] was the realigning election." For the Democrats, it at least realigned the Electoral College.

Republicans who had cheered the 49-state landslides by Nixon in '72 and Reagan in '84 were shocked to see Bill Clinton and Al Gore, in addition to carrying their home states, grab the electoral votes of Kentucky, Louisiana and Georgia. The Bush-Quayle showing of 53.4% in '88 declined all the way to 37.4% in '92 — a market-share even lower than historic losers George McGovern in '72 and Barry Goldwater in '64.

A Bush-41 ADDENDUM — for Fun, and Perhaps Self-Protection

One of the "issues" that rankles political operatives is privacy — their own. It isn't that they think they can have much, or any. Rather, the anxiety is over

the one remark, voicemail, or bit of text — out of 20,000 or a million — that could blow them up.

Along those lines, we'll wrap up the Bush 41 Era with a kudo (did you know a "kudo" can be singular?) for that President's most energetic defender. I really did enjoy our 2010 phone interview, and Sununu Sr. seemed to as well. Here's the surprising way it wrapped up...

GREGORSKY: You've turned all your [White House] papers over to one of the universities?

JOHN SUNUNU Sr.: I had no papers. I wrote no memos. I sent no e-mails. I wrote NOTHING as chief of staff.

GREGORSKY: That's amazing.

SUNUNU: No, that's SMART [genial laughter]. Look, I lived with computers; I grew up with them, right? I'm an engineer. But, I stayed away from e-mail [during the '80s] — you know, e-mail wasn't widespread then, but it was AROUND.

GREGORSKY: Sure.

SUNUNU: I never sent an e-mail and, as for memos, I may have written three or four, maximum.

GREGORSKY: So you'd go into a senior staff meeting and have just a few handwritten notes as to what the agenda is going to be? You wouldn't have passed out an agenda?

SUNUNU: [Pause] They listened very carefully.

[Mutual laughter]

American politics have gotten so raw and mistrustful, if not vile, that a new generation might take a lesson in professional self-control from that very durable Northeastern GOP practitioner.

© 2016 and 2018, [Frank Gregorsky](#)