

House GOP leader retires, ignites race for successor

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House GOP Leader Robert Michel's retirement ignited an immediate race for a successor Monday, and the combative Newt Gingrich emerged as the early front-runner. Michel, the Illinois lawmaker who has led House Republicans for 13 years, made an emotional farewell in hometown Peoria as he announced he would not seek a 20th term in Congress next year. The announcement of his departure

comes at a time when Republicans are still groping to mold an effective role for themselves now that the Democrats control both the White House and Congress. The race to replace Michel is seen as both a contest of styles, and a battle over who can best define and develop strategy for the minority party in Congress. "I don't know if it will be a fight for a soul of the party as much as it's going to be an issue of perceived style," said GOP Rep. Peter Hoekstra. Gingrich, the outspoken Georgian

who holds the No. 2 GOP job as minority whip, wouldn't comment on his intentions Monday. He scheduled an announcement Thursday and told colleagues he would be running for Michel's seat. Rep. Gerald Solomon of New York, aggressive and hard-charging in his own right as the ranking Republican on the Rules Committee, is considered a potential candidate and scheduled a late-afternoon news conference. Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois, who

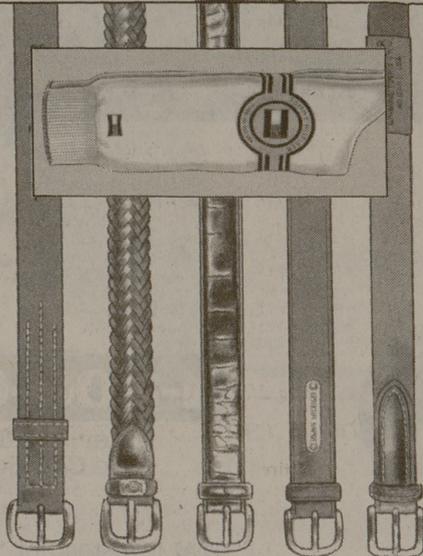
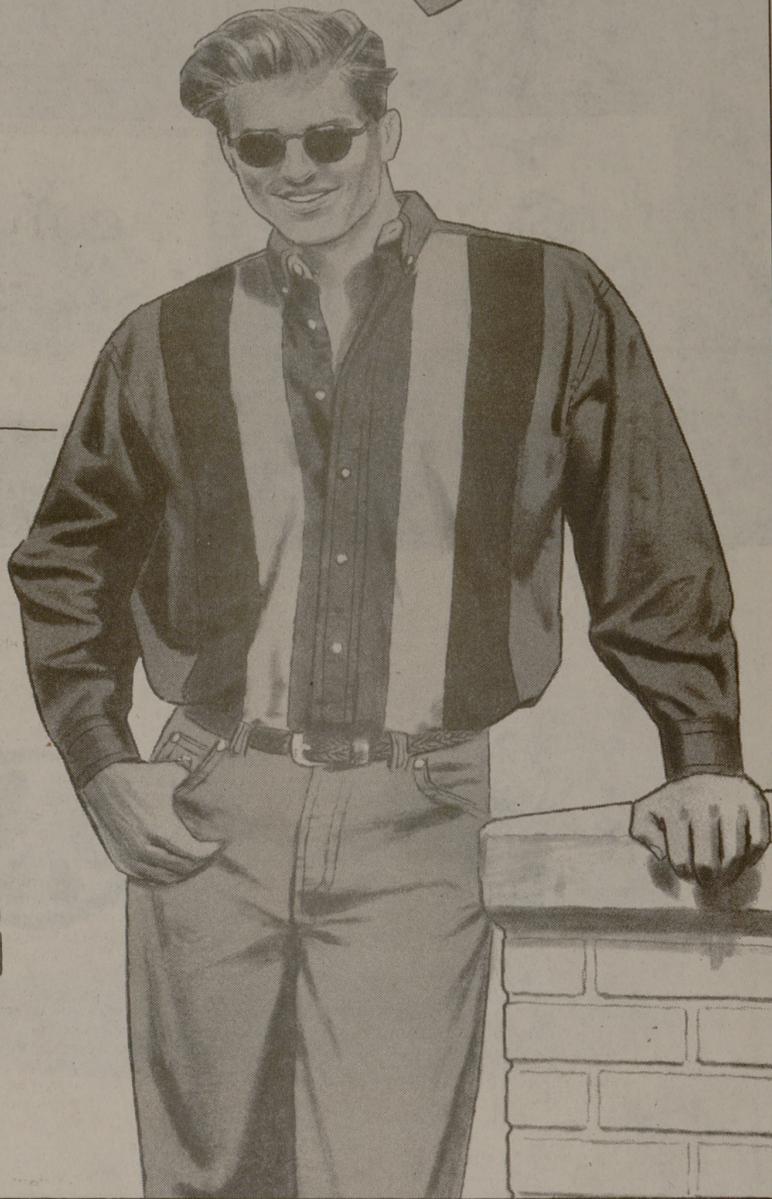
heads the Republican Policy Committee, has built up formidable stature with his 19 years in the House and has voiced an interest in Michel's job. Hyde issued a statement saying he had no present plans to run, but he noted the contest was 14 months away. Rep. Bill Archer of Texas, the ranking Republican on the Ways and Means Committee, said through a spokesman he had been approached by several colleagues and urged to run, but had not made up his mind yet.

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Dillard's

Court begins 1993-94 term with curious new justice

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court began its 1993-94 term Monday with an avalanche of paperwork and an assertive new justice who peppered lawyers with questions from the bench.

The court, issuing orders in nearly 1,500 cases, denied review to most. It agreed to decide whether convicted murderers may insist that jurors choosing life or death sentences be told that parole is impossible.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked 17 questions through the first hour-long argument.

She asked her first question nine minutes into the session. The two most junior of her eight colleagues — Justices Clarence Thomas and David H. Souter — had waited one day and three weeks before uttering anything from the bench.

Ginsburg, appointed by President Clinton, also asked plenty of questions in the two other cases argued Monday.

The justices said they will study a South Carolina death row inmate's argument that he was sentenced unfairly because a trial judge refused to tell the sentencing jury that a life sentence would carry no chance of parole.

In other matters, the court: Rejected an appeal by officials seeking to bar students from forming a religion club and meeting for prayer and Bible study at a Renton, Wash., high school.

Cleared the way for an avowed white supremacist's third trial in the 1963 murder in Mississippi of civil rights leader Medgar Evers. The justices turned down Byron De La Beckwith's arguments that forcing him to stand trial again violates his constitutional rights.

Agreed to decide whether a Missouri town violated the free-speech rights of a woman who was told to remove a sign protesting the Persian Gulf war from her house's front window.

Refused to lift mass murderer John Wayne Gacy Jr.'s death sentences for the sex killings of 33 young men and boys in Illinois.

Refused to block a trial in which the Chicago Fire Department must defend its efforts to promote more blacks and Hispanics against a racial-bias challenge by white firefighters.

Turned away the appeal of a men-only Elks lodge in St. George, Utah, forced to let a woman become a member or give up its liquor license.

Left intact a ruling that 55 civil rights and women's rights groups said "threatens to perpetuate discrimination against women and minorities in upper-level employment in America." The court rejected Nancy Ezold's arguments that a sexually biased "glass ceiling" is why she wasn't made a partner of a Philadelphia law firm.

In Simmons' case, the state judge rejected a request that the sentencing jury be told a life sentence would carry with it no chance of parole. The judge allowed prosecutors to argue that Simmons represented a future danger if not executed.

During its deliberations, the jury asked the judge whether Simmons could be paroled if sentenced to life. The judge said the jury should not consider parole, and that the terms death and life imprisonment "are to be understood in their plain and ordinary meaning."

Simmons argues that jurors may have been misled into believing he could be eligible for parole someday.

The South Carolina Supreme Court disagreed, ruling that the judge's instructions to jurors made it clear that parole was not a possibility.

State prosecutors had urged the justices to reject Simmons' appeal, saying ineligibility for parole doesn't mean a convicted murderer never will be released from prison. Such an inmate could win a pardon, they noted.