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Observer: The Republicans, Short and Sweet

By RUSSELL BAKER

WASHINGTON, July 31 — A brief guide to the Republican party for people who will be watching television next week and do not want to appear gauche by having to ask, "What in heaven's name is wrong with my television set?"

1. Chemical structure — The Republican party is a large mass of politicians held together by the three-button suit. Unlike the Democratic party, which is a gas, the Republican party is a solid, and therefore sinks almost immediately when immersed in elections.

The G.O.P.

2. History — The Republican party was born in 1854 and died in 1932 at the grand old age of 78, which is why it is still referred to as the Grand Old Party, or G.O.P.

With the election in 1860 of the first Republican President, Raymond Massey, the party entered an era of greatness which produced an extraordinary succession of American Presidents whom nobody has ever heard of, or if he has, wishes he hadn't. Among them were Ruth-erford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, Warren Gamaliel

Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover.

3. Purpose — When the President goes each January to Capitol Hill to read his State of the Union message to a joint session of Congress, the occasion is nationally televised by the networks. It is invariably an exceedingly dull speech, and to keep the TV audience entertained the cameras must frequently pan across the House chamber to show Congressional reaction. To avoid the monotony of showing a continually applauding Congress, the networks insist on having some people in the audience who will look unhappy and sit on their hands. The Republicans are retained for this purpose.

4. Hobbies — The Republican party's favorite hobby is suicide.

5. Who is Thomas E. Dewey? — Thomas E. Dewey was unanimously elected President of the United States in October, 1948, by the American press and polls, succeeding Harry S. Truman. He served until 7 o'clock on the morning after Election Day.

6. Philosophy — The Republican party being the instrument of the well-educated American middle class, it is not surprising that its thinkers have produced over the years enough

statements of principle to fill a volume the size of "The Quotations of Chairman Mao." Among these are, "Keep cool with Coolidge," "A chicken in every pot," "Return to normalcy," and "I like Ike."

No Two Agree

7. Heroes — Like the Democrats, and even the Communists, the Republican party has many heroes. Their names, however, are never mentioned. Since no two Republicans agree on who is a hero and who is a villain, the Republican party has discovered over the years that it can best maintain peace by keeping quiet about heroes.

8. Natural habitat — The Republican party is indigenous to the central United States, the East Side of Manhattan and upper New England. Attempts to transplant it to other regions have resulted in peculiar mutations, such as the curious red-neck variant noted in the Southern regions and the highly irritable "right-wing" Republican found in Southern California—so called because his enormously disproportionate right wing creates the illusion that he lacks not only a left wing and a torso, but also a head. In recent years, the Republican party has been sighted with

increasing rarity in Washington, D. C., where it appears to feel ill at ease and left out.

9. What sort of person belongs to the Republican party? — probably your brother-in-law, and almost certainly your mother-in-law. Strip-tease dancers, policemen, gangsters, shop stewards and Presidents of the United States are practically never Republicans.

Ike a Republican?

10. If that's so, what about Dwight D. Eisenhower — Dwight D. Eisenhower was never President of the United States. He was General Emeritus of the United States. For that matter, studies are still not complete, but there is considerable doubt that he is a Republican.

11. What would happen to the Grand Old Party if it were to win the elections this year? — Conditioned for thirty-six years to resist the party in power, a victorious Republican party would have no alternative but to oppose itself with all its strength and resources. Unless the Democratic party intervened to save it—and if there is one thing the Democratic party needs for its own survival it is the Republican party — the Grand Old Party would have no other choice but to destroy itself—again.