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CRAMER V. KIRK: THE FLORIDA REPUBLICAN SCHISM OF 1970

by BILLY B. HATHORN

Having languished for nearly a century as a nominal political entity, Florida Republicans seemed poised by 1970 to establish parity, if not supplant, the Democrats as the Sunshine State's majority party. The groundwork for such a metamorphosis had been laid when Eisenhower and Nixon won Florida in four of the five presidential elections between 1952 and 1968. William Cato "Bill" Cramer was elected in 1954 as the state's first twentieth-century Republican Congressman, and Claude Roy Kirk, Jr., seized the governorship twelve years later amid the internecine bickering of Democratic factions. Moreover, Edward J. Gurney's 1968 United States Senate victory was the sole statewide Republican triumph that year outside the presidential contest in the eleven ex-Confederate states. In the crucial 1970 elections, the Republicans seemed poised to re-elect Kirk and win a second Senate seat with what the *New York Times* termed "inexorable strength and unlimited potential."¹ But the squabbling that previously crippled the Democrats now wreaked havoc on the fledgling GOP as the conflicting interests of five leading Republicans shook the party to its foundation: Congressman Cramer and his senatorial rival, former Judge G. Harrold Carswell; Governor Kirk and his primary foe, businessman Jack M. Eckerd; and Senator Gurney, whose potential soon deteriorated to the extent that he would retire from politics after a single term. It may be argued, however, that despite the 1970 losses, the GOP could have remained competitive in Florida had Kirk not undermined Cramer's Senate candidacy. This article examines how the Cramer-Kirk schism helped re-cement Democratic hegemony and delayed the establishment of a competitive two-party system in Florida.

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1. *New York Times*, September 30, 1970,

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Cramer was born in Denver, Colorado, August 4, 1922, and moved with his parents to St. Petersburg where he would wage his first political campaigns in student government at St. Petersburg High School and Junior College. His roots were anchored in the Protestant "work ethic": as a teenager he sold fruit, flowers, and candy and worked as a grocery clerk and theater usher. Before entering college at the University of North Carolina, he was a bellhop at a North Carolina resort hotel. When Cramer sought public office, voters who remembered his active youth dubbed him "the orange boy."² After World War II service in Europe and subsequent graduation from the Harvard Law School, Cramer was admitted to the Florida bar. He became a Republican in 1949 when statewide registration was still fourteen-to-one Democratic. Among those nudging Cramer to Republicanism was his law partner, Herman Wilson Goldner, subsequently mayor of St. Petersburg.

Florida's geographic configuration and uneven population distribution has made it more difficult for Democratic factions to persist because urbanites have been unwilling to accept domination by a few party leaders. V. O. Key, Jr., described Florida elections in the years prior to the modern Republican emergence as "personality-oriented within narrow ideological boundaries." At first, the Republicans, largely migrants from the Midwest and North, challenged Democratic control in Pinellas County and other retiree centers. The migration of business executives and older citizens had drastically altered the partisan profile of the region. As early as 1928, Herbert Hoover helped carry Pinellas Republicans to victory in races for sheriff, judge, assessor, and state senator. In 1948, Republican Thomas E. Dewey won Pinellas, Sarasota, Palm Beach, Broward, and Orange counties, and a third of the statewide vote. Dissent against the national Democrats resumed between 1952 and 1972, though Lyndon Johnson carried both Florida and Pinellas County as part of his presidential victory. Jimmy Carter, be-

2. William Cramer, tape-recorded interview with author, Washington, DC, February 12, 1988; *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington, DC, 1971), 796. Besides consenting to a twenty-three-page, single-spaced, typed interview with the author, Cramer has deposited his congressional papers with the Cramer Library, University of Tampa.

neficiary of an influx of blue-collar voters, almost won Pinellas County in 1976.³

Cramer ran for the legislature in 1950, and was campaign manager for the Pinellas Republican slate, none of whose fourteen members had previously sought office. The Republicans, decrying inefficient government and “boss-type” politics, organized at the grassroots and, at Cramer’s insistence, offered a unified ticket, a procedure still followed in the county. All but one of the GOP candidates were elected. Cramer became “titular head” of the Pinellas GOP; in 1974, the State Executive Committee honored him as Florida’s “Mr. Republican.”⁴

In 1967, the *Tampa Tribune* humorously paraphrased Genesis to stress Cramer’s role in the GOP: “In the beginning there was the party, and the party was with Bill Cramer, and the party was Bill Cramer.”⁵ When Cramer’s two Republican colleagues named him minority leader in 1951, Democrats teased them for “caucusing in a phone booth.” The Florida legislature operates under United States House rules, and Cramer’s assertion of “minority rights” raised his visibility and influence. He defended junior colleges from challenges waged by the legislative leadership and the four-year institutions; Cramer considered such schools essential to low-cost education. He also worked to establish the state’s first anti-crime commission, but the Democrats refused to name any Republicans to the panel.⁶

In 1952, Cramer ran for Congress in an “open” district against Democrat Courtney W. Campbell, a Clearwater businessman and former state highway board member. Spending \$25,000 in a handshaking campaign about Pinellas, Hill-

3. Bruce A. Campbell, “Patterns of Change in the Partisan Loyalties of Native Southerners: 1952-1972,” *Journal of Politics* 39 (August 1977), 736-37, 755, 761; Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence Since 1945* (New York, 1976), 117; *New York Times*, September 11, 30, 1970; V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949), 83-85, 281; David J. Ginzl, “The Politics of Patronage: Florida Republicans During the Hoover Administration,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 61 (July 1982), 5; *U.S. News and World Report*, November 12, 1954, 30; Alexander P. Lamis, *The Two-Party South* (New York, 1984), 181; Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa and Douglas Matthews, *The Almanac of American Politics* (New York, 1979), 182-83.

4. Cramer interview; *U.S. News and World Report*, November 12, 1954, 87; *Time*, November 15, 1954, 26.

5. *Tampa Tribune*, June 18, 1967.

6. Cramer interview.

sborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties, Cramer benefited from the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket, though he lost by .7 percent. In 1954, Cramer, with a stronger organization, unseated Campbell by the same .7 percent margin. Cramer, however, found the \$40,000 spent in the race insufficient for television advertising. The state GOP, which had offered no aid in 1952, contributed \$4,000 in 1954.⁷ Florida Democratic Congressman Robert "Bob" Sikes depicted Campbell as "hard-working, dedicated and capable" but ineffective in public speaking. Sikes, who stumped for Campbell, later remembered: "[I]t was easy to diagnose the trouble; Courtney couldn't cope with the articulate Cramer on the platform. His speeches were wooden and uninteresting. I attempted to help him and even wrote out some short messages which I thought would be effective in getting his story across to his constituents. I was dismayed when I heard him deliver them. He sounded like a third grader struggling through a reading assignment. Cramer was articulate, a successful lawyer, and he already enjoyed some recognition in public life. In my effort to help Campbell, I said that Cramer, serving in a Democratic Congress, would be like a lost ball in high weeds. Bill never let me forget that statement, although subsequently we became good friends."⁸

Cramer's breakthrough did not seem to register with GOP chairman Harold Alexander of Fort Myers who handled federal patronage outside Cramer's district. Cramer recalls that Alexander did "his best to put me in my place," though Cramer was the first Republican in the Florida delegation in seventy-two years. Cramer claims Alexander overemphasized patronage to the neglect of voter registration.⁹

By 1964, after a decade in the House, Cramer was elected in the primary as Republican national committeeman, a position he held for twenty consecutive years, and he headed a presidential delegate slate pledged to Barry Goldwater. Cramer said Goldwater asked him to circumvent the party "regulars" led by

7. *Ibid.*; *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, 697; Florida, *General Election Returns*, November, 1954 (Tallahassee, 1954); *U. S. News and World Report*, November 21, 1952, 49-51; November 12, 1954, 87; *Time*, November 15, 1954, 26.

8. Robert Lee Fulton Sikes, *He-Coon: The Bob Sikes Story* (Pensacola, 1985), 324.

9. Cramer interview.

Alexander's successor, Tom Brown of Tampa, because the leadership had been too passive in the past. Gurney, a transplanted New Englander from Winter Park who had been elected to Congress in 1962, initially joined the insurgents. Cramer claimed the state committee had "never been really interested in electing Republicans," and had "ignored Republicans when they were elected." When the primary grew divisive, Gurney withdrew his earlier backing of the Cramer insurgents. The Goldwaterites tried to "marry" the two slates, but Cramer said Brown's faction made such demands that no "marriage" was possible. When Goldwater's nomination became certain, GOP strategist Richard Kleindienst halted a scheduled appearance for the Cramer slate by Goldwater's two sons. As the "regulars" just barely won the primary, Cramer contends his side could have prevailed had Goldwater's backing remained intact. Cramer charged that the "regulars" may have "sold out" Goldwater had the "stop-Goldwater" coalition been credible.¹⁰

In 1964, the politically unknown Claude Kirk opposed Democratic Senator Spessard L. Holland, the former governor and epitome of the Florida Democratic "establishment." While considered a "sacrificial lamb," Kirk campaigned enthusiastically and polled 36.1 percent of the vote. Born in California, Kirk later moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where his father was secretary to the state House of Representatives. Before entering politics, he formed the American Heritage Life Insurance Company in Jacksonville and the Kirk Investment Company in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.¹¹ Cramer claims that Kirk would "beg me" to let him address meetings during the delegate and national committee races. Thereby, Cramer contends that Kirk received his first exposure to GOP voters.¹² Two years later, having labeled his Democratic rival, Miami Mayor Robert King High, as an "ultraliberal," Kirk was elected governor in a startling upset. He polled 821,190 votes to High's 668,233 and carried fifty-six of the state's sixty-seven counties. Kirk received 355,585

10. Ibid.; Barone, et al., *The Almanac of American Politics*, 187; Robert D. Novak, *The Agony of the G.O.P., 1964* (New York, 1965), 291-92, 368; Bernard Cosman, *Five States for Goldwater* (Tuscaloosa, 1966), 112.

11. Charles Moritz, ed., *Current Biography Yearbook, 1967* (New York, 1967), 232.

12. Cramer interview.

more votes than the number of registered Republicans.¹³ Some time during the campaign, a schism developed between Cramer and Kirk. The “bad blood” has persisted to the point that in a 1988 interview, Kirk said he could not recall Cramer’s having rendered him any assistance in his 1964 or 1966 races. “Cramer never helped me do anything,” Kirk reported. “At all times he was a total combatant.”¹⁴

Kirk claims that Cramer wanted the gubernatorial nomination himself after the “conservative” runner-up Democrat, Governor Haydon Burns, refused to endorse High. Kirk said that Cramer’s legislative assistant, Jack P. Inscoe, a Tampa developer, could verify that Cramer had asked Kirk to bow out. Kirk contends the three met in May or June of 1966 “in a car . . . probably in Palm Beach County.”¹⁵ Inscoe denies the allegation. “This never happened. Kirk is not known for telling too much truth.” Though Cramer insists that he never wished to be governor, Kirk asks, “How could I have brought this up if it didn’t happen?”¹⁶

Cramer subsequently urged Kirk to merge the Pinellas gubernatorial operation with the regular organization, but Kirk organized a separate campaign to maximize Democratic support. Cramer recalls this disagreement as the “first indication that Kirk intended to do his own thing and attempt to form his own organization within the Republican party in Florida. I didn’t get the signal at the time, but it became very obvious later, particularly when he attempted to defeat me as national committeeman in 1968.”¹⁷ Kirk asked Gurney to serve as chairman at his inauguration, although Gurney had not been involved in the early Kirk campaigns. Cramer was not even asked to serve on the inaugural committee.¹⁸ In 1968, Kirk dispatched his staff to

13. High had become the Democratic candidate after a very bitter and divisive party campaign against the incumbent, Governor Haydon Burns. Florida, *General Election Returns*, November 8, 1966; Moritz, *Current Biography Yearbook*, 1967, 233.

14. Claude Kirk, telephone interview with author, Palm Beach, FL, March 7, 1988.

15. *Ibid.*, May 3, 1988.

16. Jack Inscoe, telephone conversation with author, Tampa, FL, May 3, 1988; Cramer interview.

17. Kirk interview, May 3, 1988; Cramer interview.

18. Cramer interview.

the Republican state convention in Orlando to seek Cramer's removal as national committeeman. "I wanted my own man," Kirk said. "After all, I was the leader of the party. If Cramer had been the leader of the party, he would have wanted his own man too."¹⁹ Cramer accused Kirk of attempting to be "not only the governor but the king of the party, and I was about the only person at the time who stood in his way from taking total control." Cramer attributes his retention as committeeman to the loyalty of organizational Republicans. "I had proved myself an effective congressman. I was on the House leadership as vice-chairman of the Republican Conference and was ranking member on the Public Works Committee."²⁰

Recalling a 1967 visit to Kirk's office, Cramer said that a former legislator was denied an appointment with the governor even though the man was a stalwart Republican. "Kirk made it very clear that he got a great deal of joy in making sure that this guy didn't get an appointment. . . . He just loved to kick people in the teeth to show how much power he had," Cramer charged. Despite witnessing such scenes, Cramer claimed party unity led him to avoid public criticism of Kirk; Cramer viewed Kirk as "his own worst enemy."²¹ Kirk denies that he ever had a "serious discussion" with Cramer on any topic.²² Walter Wurfel, a Floridian who was President Carter's deputy press secretary, termed Kirk's election in 1966 the "worst thing that could have happened to the Republicans. He wasn't interested in the Republican party; party was a matter of convenience for him."²³

Cramer believed that Kirk may have become vice-president or president had he tended to his gubernatorial duties. Eying the vice-presidency, Kirk stood alone from his delegation at the Miami convention by supporting New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller rather than the almost certain nominee, Richard Nixon. Cramer claims that Nixon might have selected Kirk over Spiro T. Agnew of Maryland, another freshman governor, had Kirk met his responsibilities as governor of Florida rather than actively soliciting the vice-presidency. Kirk claims that it had

19. Kirk interview, March 7, 1988.

20. Cramer interview.

21. Ibid.

22. Kirk interview, March 7, 1988.

23. Quoted in Lamis, *Two-Party South*, 292.

been “agreed” that he would run with either Nixon or Rockefeller, but, he insists, Nixon picked Agnew to obtain contributions from Greek-American businessmen.²⁴

While the Republicans convened in Miami in 1968, the party sensed a historic opportunity to gain the Senate seat being vacated by George Smathers. The Democratic nomination went to former Governor LeRoy Collins, an ally of the embattled President Johnson. Cramer and Gurney were prospective primary opponents until Cramer, citing a “gentlemen’s agreement” with Gurney, said he had stepped aside to permit his colleague to run with the “understanding” that Gurney would back Cramer for senator in 1970. “He pledged his support to me, and I did to him, and we shook hands.” Cramer added that postponement of his Senate race would allow him to finish various projects in the House.²⁵

Cramer’s former law partner, Herman Goldner, termed by the press as a “liberal” Republican after he backed Johnson in 1964, opposed Gurney in the primary, but he polled only a few votes.²⁶ Gurney defeated Collins in the general election, 1,131,499 to 892,637, and carried all but four counties. Thereafter, Gurney and Cramer crisscrossed the state in various party-building activities. In the fall of 1969, a few weeks before Senator Holland confirmed his retirement, Cramer declared his candidacy for the Senate. Nixon had urged Cramer to run. “Bill, the Senate needs you, the country needs you, the people need you— now, run.”²⁷

The Cramer-Gurney “agreement” unraveled after April 8, 1970, when the Senate rejected Nixon’s second consecutive Supreme Court nominee, Tallahassee’s Judge Harrold Carswell of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, whose judicial service had begun under Eisenhower. Gurney and Holland, both Carswell supporters, were dismayed when a bipartisan coalition rejected him fifty-five to forty-five on allegations of “mediocrity” and

24. Cramer interview; Kirk interview, March 7, 1988.

25. Cramer interview.

26. *New York Times*, January 28, May 8, 1968. See Patrick H. Gaddell, “Florida Politics: The Myth and the Reality” (honors thesis, Harvard University, May 1969) for details of the 1966 and 1968 elections.

27. Florida, *General Election Returns*, November 5, 1968; *New York Times*, September 18, 28, November 13, 1969, April 29, 1970; *Newsweek*, May 4, 1970, 29.

past “racism.”²⁸ Carswell was quoted as having stated in the late 1940s, while living in Georgia, that “segregation is the only practical and correct way of life in our states. I have always believed and shall always act so.”²⁹ In his defense, Carswell noted that former Presidents Truman and Johnson had made similar comments in their earlier years. Hoping to benefit from the uproar in Florida over Carswell’s rejection, aides of either Kirk or Gurney proposed that Carswell resign from the bench to run for the United States Senate. Gurney, who declined to discuss the “gentlemen’s agreement” with Cramer, said only that he and Cramer have “totally different opinions on that. That is ancient history, and I see no point in reviving things. . . . If I told my complete version of the matter, Cramer would not believe me, and I don’t want Bill angry at me.” Gurney added that he was unaware that Cramer had considered running for the Senate at the time Gurney declared his candidacy.³⁰

When Kirk and Gurney endorsed Carswell, Florida Lieutenant Governor Ray C. Osborne, a Kirk ally from St. Petersburg, abandoned his own challenge to Cramer. Years later, Kirk said that he “should have stuck with Osborne [now a Boca Raton attorney] and not encouraged Carswell to run.” He insisted that he had not “created” Carswell’s candidacy.³¹ Carswell said he wanted to “confront the liberals who shot me down” but denied that Kirk took advantage of the failed confirmation to thwart Cramer. “I was only vaguely aware of any differences between Kirk and Cramer. . . . Neither then nor now did I feel used. . . . What feud they had was their own.” Carswell added that he had no knowledge of any “gentlemen’s agreement” between Cramer and Gurney and had considered running for the Senate before Nixon nominated him to the Supreme Court.³² Quoting the verse “by your enemies ye shall be known,” Carswell blamed his

28. *New York Times*, April 9, 26, July 13, 1970.

29. *Ibid.*, April 21, July 13, 1970.

30. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1970; Edward Gurney, telephone interview with author, Winter Park, FL, May 6, 1988.

31. Kirk interview, March 7, 1988; *U. S. News and World Report*, September 7, 1970, 34-35; *New York Times*, April 21, 1970.

32. *Newsweek*, May 4, 1970, 29; Harrold Carswell, written interview, Monticello, FL, March 10, 1988.

loss on “dark evil winds of liberalism” and the “northern press and its knee-jerking followers in the Senate.”³³

Carswell believed that Florida needed a second Republican senator because “even a conservative Democrat would automatically vote to place the chamber under ‘liberal’ control.”³⁴ Carswell recalled that Rogers C. B. Morton, Republican National Chairman and Maryland Representative, had told him that he considered Carswell “clearly electable” and thought Cramer should not risk a “safe” House seat. Whether Carswell expected to bluff Cramer from the race, the judge insists that he and his family were not unduly influenced by anyone.³⁵ Disputing Carswell’s interpretation of the late Rogers Morton’s position, Cramer said that he learned of Carswell’s candidacy in a call from Morton, whom Cramer described as “my dear personal friend.” When Morton asked if Cramer planned to abandon the Senate race, Cramer replied that neither Carswell, Kirk, nor Gurney had consulted him. Cramer quoted Morton as having vividly termed such machinations as among the worst “double crosses” he had witnessed. Cramer speculated that Carswell was being influenced by the “back room wiles” of Kirk and Gurney because Kirk had a state patrolman intercept Carswell while the judge was headed for a central Florida vacation after the confirmation debacle.³⁶ The White House and the Republican National Committee sat out the primary even though President Nixon preferred Cramer. Gerald Warren, deputy press secretary, insisted that Nixon had “no knowledge and no involvement” in Carswell’s candidacy.³⁷ Gurney, however, claimed that Nixon aide Harry Dent, a South Carolinian with ties to Senator Strom Thurmond, had urged Carswell to run.³⁸ Carswell secured endorsements from such celebrities as John Wayne and Gene Autry and retained Richard Viguerie, the Falls Church, Virginia, direct mail specialist, to raise funds.³⁹ Cramer’s Senate

33. *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970; *New York Times*, July 13, 1970; *U. S. News and World Report*, September 7, 1970, 34-35.

34. Carswell interview; *Facts on File* 30 (April 20, 1970), 263.

35. Carswell interview; *Newsweek*, September 21, 1970, 39; *Time*, September 21, 1970, 16-17.

36. Cramer interview; *Newsweek*, May 4, 1970, 29.

37. *New York Times*, April 21, 23, 29, September 9, 1970.

38. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1970; *Time*, September 21, 1970, 16-17.

39. *New York Times*, May 29, 1970; *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 14, 1970. Richard Viguerie declined three requests to discuss his fund-raising activities in the Carswell campaign.

candidacy paved the way for his former district assistant, C. William “Bill” Young of St. Petersburg, then Florida’s senate minority leader, to seek the Congressional seat Cramer had vacated, a position that Young has retained with few obstacles since 1971.

Stressing his amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act that forbade “forced busing” to achieve racial balance, Cramer questioned Carswell’s concurrence in two Fifth Circuit busing edicts.⁴⁰ Carswell first tried to ignore Cramer’s accusation, but he then resorted to “long-winded legalisms” to lambaste the “idiocy” of busing.⁴¹ Carswell’s speeches were compared to “legal opinions” aimed at such confirmation critics as Senators Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Birch Bayh, Jr., of Indiana. As a circuit judge, Carswell was bound by high court precedent that, after 1968, decreed busing as an available tool to achieve racial balance. Like Cramer, Kirk was also identified with anti-busing forces when he attempted without success in 1970 to halt a Manatee County desegregation plan.⁴² Kirk satirized the New Orleans-based “busing” judges for allegedly “drinking in the French Quarter and reading dirty books.”⁴³ Cramer broadened his ire beyond busing to denounce “cop killers, bombers, burners, and racial revolutionaries who would destroy America.”⁴⁴

Cramer’s colleagues, particularly Congressman Sikes, viewed him as intelligent and hardworking, but Sarasota Democrat James Haley was less charitable. Haley scoffed that Cramer was “little in stature and big in mouth” and suggested that he should “talk less and work more.”⁴⁵ Prior to the bruised feelings over the “gentlemen’s agreement,” Cramer and Gurney had worked well as colleagues but were not close friends. “In looking back on it, I realize that Gurney was very much his own man and apparently was not too comfortable with my being the ranking Republican in the delegation,” Cramer reflected. Kirk tried to

40. *Newsweek*, September 21, 1970, 39; *Time*, September 21, 1970, 16-17; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 6, 1970; *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970.

41. *New York Times*, July 31, 1970; *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 6, 1970.

42. *New York Times*, September 13, 1970; *Miami Herald*, September 4, October 17, 1970; *Time*, September 21, 1970, 16-17.

43. *Miami Herald*, September 5, 1970.

44. *New York Times*, August 31, 1970; *Facts on File* 30 (September 16, 1970), 661.

45. *Tampa Tribune*, June 18, 1967.

isolate Cramer from Gurney by naming Gurney's Orlando law firm counsel for the Florida Turnpike Authority at a \$100,000 annual retainer. By contrast, Cramer's firm received no state business.⁴⁶

Cramer said that he had a friendly acquaintance with Carswell prior to 1970, but he subsequently viewed Carswell as a "pawn" of "would-be kingmakers" Kirk and Gurney. Cramer attributed his primary triumph to his grassroots base and to Carswell's lack of campaign experience.⁴⁷ Carswell, however, claims his own support among Democrats would have asserted itself had Florida used the "open primary" of Georgia or Alabama. Carswell further maintains that the successful Democratic senatorial nominee Lawton Chiles told him privately that Chile's polls showed Cramer would lose the general election but that Carswell would be competitive. Carswell said his polls showed that he could obtain nearly all the Republican vote and 40 percent Democratic backing.⁴⁸

The Cramer-Kirk schism also affected Jack Eckerd's gubernatorial aspirations. A native Pennsylvanian who had relocated to Florida after World War II to launch a drugstore chain specializing in innovative merchandising, Eckerd declared for governor before Carswell entered the Senate race. He warned that Kirk's renomination could produce a Republican fiasco in the fall.⁴⁹ In a primary endorsement, the *Miami Herald* depicted Eckerd as an "efficient campaigner with the ability to bring people together constructively" with "a common touch, dedication to high principle and organizing genius."⁵⁰ Though loosely aligned with Eckerd, Cramer endorsed no one in the gubernatorial primary that also included State Representative (and later Congressman) Louis "Skip" Bafalis. Cramer admits that he voted for Eckerd in the primary and runoff but denies having encouraged Eckerd to run. "I obviously didn't say I would oppose him but indicated that I had my own race." Distracted that Kirk's antics had led to a fratricidal primary, Cramer said he

46. Cramer interview; *New York Times*, April 21, 1970; *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970.

47. Cramer interview; *New York Times*, April 22, 1970.

48. Carswell interview; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 4, 1970. Lawton Chiles did not reply to two written requests for an interview.

49. Cramer interview.

50. *Miami Herald*, September 6, 1970.

“customarily” avoided involvement in primaries outside his own race.⁵¹ Kirk claims that Cramer assisted Eckerd, and he hurls harsh words at both men. Kirk, whom the press had depicted as the arrogant “Claudius Maximus I,” said Eckerd is “notorious for his ability to change the scope of the truth. He has an ego problem.” Kirk denounced Eckerd for having contributed funds to several Democrats in earlier elections, for allegedly running down a Cuban fisherman in a yacht race, and for spending heavily from his personal fortune. As for Cramer, Kirk claimed that he had exercised no “input on the nation after eight [House] terms.”⁵²

Cramer polled 220,553 votes to Carswell’s 121,281. A third contender, businessman George Balmer, drew 10,947 votes.⁵³ Carswell expressed no regret over having resigned from the bench to seek the elusive Senate seat.⁵⁴ Republican Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, who opposed Carswell’s confirmation, said Carswell was “asking for it, and he got what he deserved.”⁵⁵ Kirk received 172,888 primary ballots, but Bafalis’s 48,378 votes were enough to require a runoff with Eckerd, who received 137,731. In the runoff, Kirk prevailed, 199,943 to 152,327, after obtaining Bafalis’s reluctant endorsement.⁵⁶ In Melbourne, Kirk denied that he had arranged any deal with Bafalis, who earlier had accused Kirk of having “made Florida the laughingstock of the nation.” Years later Bafalis blamed Kirk’s defeat on “stupid things he did.”⁵⁷ Though Carswell and Eckerd endorsed Cramer and Kirk, they were inactive in the fall campaign. The tense primaries left the GOP in a defensive posture against the Democrats, State Senators Reubin Askew of Pensacola and Lawton Chiles of Lakeland, who skillfully healed philosophical divisions amid their own ranks. Apprehensive Republicans cheered Congressman Louis Frey, Jr., who in an ad-

51. Cramer interview; *New York Times*, September 8, 30, 1970.

52. Kirk interview, March 7, 1988; *Miami Herald*, September 7, 16, 20, 21, 25, 1970.

53. Florida, *Primary Election Returns*, September 8, 1970; *Time*, September 21, 1970, 16-17.

54. *Miami Herald*, September 3, 1970; *New York Times*, September 9, 1970.

55. *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 10, 1970.

56. Florida, *Primary Election Results*, September 8, 29, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 12, 14, 1970.

57. *Miami Herald*, September 9, 16, October 23, 1970; quoted in Lamis, *Two-Party South*, 292.

dress before the GOP state convention in Orlando implored the factions to forget their “family feud” and unite for the general election.⁵⁸

Yet primary lacerations long haunted the GOP. “Askew and Chiles form a logical team; Kirk and Cramer don’t,” insisted the *Miami Herald* in reference to an “uneasy alliance” between the Republican nominees.⁵⁹ Despite the public unity after the primaries, tension between Cramer and Kirk endures. Cramer said he and his staff had voted a straight Republican ticket, but when asked years later if he had voted for Cramer, Kirk retorted, “That’s my business.”⁶⁰ The reply reflected columnist Joseph Kraft’s perception that Kirk had a “theatrical hair for personalizing issues.”⁶¹ In its endorsement of the Democrats, the *Herald* lauded Askew for having “captured the imagination of a state which plainly deserves new leadership.”⁶² Kirk ridiculed Askew as a “momma’s boy who wouldn’t have the courage to stand up under the fire of the legislators” and as a “nice, sweet-looking fellow chosen by ‘liberals’ . . . to front for them.”⁶³ Such rhetoric helped reactivate the Democratic coalition. Michael Thompson, the Bafalis manager who had switched to Eckerd but then sat out the general election, claimed Kirk had demolished the “coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats who elected him in 1966. . . . The trail from Tallahassee to Palm Beach is littered with the bodies of former friends, supporters and citizens— all of whom made the fatal mistake of believing the words of Claude Kirk.” Thompson added that he would not have been surprised if Kirk had even joined the Liberal-Republican mayor of New York, John Lindsay, on a third- or fourth-party presidential ticket in 1972.⁶⁴ Eckerd found that his initial satisfaction with Kirk’s election “soon dissipated into disappointment and embarrassment. . . . I was offended by his public behavior and chagrined that he was a Republican.” Despite Kirk’s tactics, Eckerd reflected that “time heals all wounds,

58. *Miami Herald*, October 4, 1970; *St. Petersburg Times*, October 4, 1970.

59. *Miami Herald*, October 1, 11, 1970.

60. Cramer interview; Kirk interview, March 7, 1988.

61. *Miami Herald*, September 7, 1970.

62. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1970.

63. *Ibid.*, October 30, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 30, 1970.

64. *Miami Herald*, September 16, 19, 1970.

and now I chuckle about it.” Eckerd added that his defeat in 1970 probably prolonged his life.⁶⁵

In the general election campaign, Cramer questioned Chiles’s state senate votes to hike automobile liability rates by 50 percent over two years and to augment school bus insurance premiums while Chiles’s agency held the policy on the Polk County board, but such “conflict-of-interest” accusations seemed to have little effect.⁶⁶ The “self-made” Cramer painted Chiles as the beneficiary of a “silver-spoon” background, but when Chiles placed his maximum assets at \$300,000, the media ignored questions about personal wealth.⁶⁷ Instead, reporters emphasized “Walking Lawton’s” ninety-two-day, 1,003-mile trek from the Florida panhandle to Key Largo. Before the walk, a “public-relations stroke of genius,” Chiles was identified by only 5 percent of voters; afterwards, he gained widespread recognition.⁶⁸ The *Tallahassee Democrat* forecast that Chiles’s “weary feet and comfortable hiking boots” would carry him to victory and described the forty-year-old Democrat as “a slow-talking country lawyer” with “boyish amiability” and “back country common sense and methodical urbane political savvy.”⁶⁹ Chiles’s “Huck Finn” image and “common man” rhetoric were contrasted one night in Miami when he held a fried chicken picnic while the GOP showcased a black-tie, \$1,000-a-plate dinner.⁷⁰

Cramer could not match Chiles’s public appeal. One observer likened Cramer’s “charisma” to a “speech in the *Congressional Record*.” A Cramer aide, citing his boss’s congressional service, decried the difficulty of “selling experience. It’s not a sexy thing.”⁷¹ One Chiles advertisement cleverly urged a “vote for yourself. Chiles thinks like you do. He walked our streets and highways to hear what you have to say. That’s why a vote

65. Jack M. Eckerd and Charles P. Conn, *Eckerd* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1987), 113-19; *Miami Herald*, September 4, 30, 1970.

66. *Miami Herald*, October 10, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 10, 18, 1970.

67. *Miami Herald*, October 23, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, November 1, 1970.

68. Lamis, *Two-Party South*, 185; *Miami Herald*, September 9, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 6, November 1, 1970; Charles Moritz, ed., *Current Biography Yearbook, 1971* (New York, 1972), 88-90.

69. *Tallahassee Democrat*, November 1, 1970; *New York Times*, September 29, 1970.

70. Moritz, *Current Biography Yearbook, 1971*, 88-90; Bass and DeVries, *Transformation of Southern Politics*, 124; *Miami Herald*, September 27, 1970.

71. *Tallahassee Democrat*, November 1, 1970; *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970.

for Chiles is like a vote for yourself."⁷² Publicizing "shoe leather and a shoestring budget," Chiles dubbed himself a "problem solver who doesn't automatically vote 'no' on every issue."⁷³ Cramer later said he should have demanded more debates and rebuffed the walking tactic. "I never could get that turned around. He was walking, and I was running. But the press was enamored with the walk, and he finally changed his strategy from walking because he . . . didn't have the contributions to pay for a campaign otherwise. . . . So everytime he was asked a question about where he stood, he would quote somebody that he met on the campaign trail, to state what he was going to do when he got to the Senate consistent with what that constituent had said. The basic approach gave him more credibility to his walk, which had nothing to do with his qualifications for the Senate but gave him free publicity and appealed to the 'little man.'"⁷⁴

Many Floridians in the 1970s feared that excessive growth might destroy the state's natural beauty. When ecology became a national matter, President Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency. Chiles opposed the Cross Florida Barge Canal, though every member of the state delegation had previously backed the project. Chiles also proposed federal funds to remove waste from the once bass-teeming Lake Apopka in central Florida.⁷⁵ By contrast, Cramer received little credit from environmentalists even though he had drafted the 1956 Water Pollution Control Act and had sponsored legislation to protect alligators, stop beach erosion, dredge harbors, and remove oil spills. Instead, a Cramer critic accused him of weakening anti-pollution laws. Cramer questioned Chiles's opposition to a proposed severance tax on phosphate mining. That particularly affected Tampa Bay. "Liberal Lawton has protected the phosphate industry—the state's single largest polluter," Cramer claimed.⁷⁶ By 1974, a survey showed Floridians favored limits

72. *Miami Herald*, September 28, 1970.

73. *Ibid.*, September 9, October 29, 1970.

74. Cramer interview.

75. Moritz, *Current Biography Yearbook, 1971*, 88-90; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 10, October 27, 1970; *Miami Herald*, October 27, 1970; *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon* (Washington, DC, 1971), 957.

76. *Tallahassee Democrat*, November 1, 1970; *Miami Herald*, October 23, 24, 1970; "Bill Cramer . . . Who Else?" campaign brochure of Cramer senatorial campaign, 1970.

on development; 60 percent urged more public funding for conservation.⁷⁷

In the 1970 primary, all major papers, except the pro-Carswell *Tallahassee Democrat*, had urged Cramer's nomination, but only three papers— in Orlando, Fort Myers, and Pasco County— stuck with Cramer during the fall. Chiles hence benefited from a nearly unanimous press.⁷⁸ In the face of such media opposition, Cramer tried in vain to pin the “liberal” label on Chiles, who instead preferred the epithet “progressive conservative.”⁷⁹ Explaining Cramer's failure to make “liberalism” an issue in 1970, the *New York Times* observed that Askew and Chiles “convey amiable good ol' boy qualities with moderate-to-liberal aspirations that do not strike fear into the hearts of conservatives.”⁸⁰

Chiles, who relied heavily on Senator Spessard Holland's backing, joked that Cramer had expected to face the primary runner-up, former Governor C. Farris Bryant who, like LeRoy Collins, Gurney's foe two years earlier, had ties to the Johnson administration. “I'm not anything Cramer thought he would be running against. So he's reduced to telling lies about me,” Chiles quipped.⁸¹ Chiles boasted that Cramer could bring “Nixon, Agnew, Reagan and anybody else he wants. . . . I'll take Holland on my side against all of them.”⁸² Chiles challenged Cramer's support for Nixon's Family Assistance Plan, which had been rejected by the Senate Finance Committee. Opponents claimed the plan would have increased costs, but Cramer argued for keeping welfare families together with hope of ultimate independence. In 1988, at the end of his Senate career, Chiles, who had earlier opposed such reform as “a guaranteed annual income,” backed a welfare program similar to what the Senate

77. Bass and DeVries, *Transformation of Southern Politics*, 116.

78. *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 6, 1970; Cramer interview. Among papers endorsing Chiles were the *St. Petersburg Times*, *Tampa Tribune*, *Tallahassee Democrat*, *Miami Herald*, *Pensacola News-Journal*, *Clearwater Sun*, *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, *Tampa Times*, *Sanford Herald*, *St. Augustine Record*, and *Ocala Star-Banner*.

79. Quoted in Numan V. Bartley and Hugh D. Graham, *Southern Politics and the Second Reconstruction* (Baltimore, 1975), 146-47; *Miami Herald*, October 27, 1970.

80. *New York Times*, October 11, 1970.

81. *Miami Herald*, October 1, 6, 14, 28, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 22, 1970; *New York Times*, September 29, 1970.

82. *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 30, 1970.

had rejected in 1970. That plan cleared the Senate with only one dissenting vote.⁸³ Chiles adopted his rival's stance on civil disorders by supporting the law that mandates the death penalty for "bombers" who cause deaths.⁸⁴ Cramer, had introduced the antiriot measure, approved 389-25 by the House, that made police assault a federal crime. The law, designed to halt criminals who cross state lines, was lauded at Cramer rallies by Vice President Agnew and Attorney General John Mitchell. It was the basis for the 1970 arrest of black communist Angela Davis and five of the 1968 "Chicago Seven" defendants.⁸⁵

Chiles countered Cramer's claim that a GOP-controlled Senate would mean removal of the controversial Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee by stressing that other southern Democrats would also forfeit chairmanships to Republicans.⁸⁶ Chiles claimed that Cramer would act as a Nixon "rubber stamp" whose partisan interests would prohibit independence.⁸⁷ In his presidential papers, Nixon, who campaigned for Cramer in Miami Beach, Palm Beach, St. Petersburg, and Tallahassee, cited the congressman's sponsorship of "significant legislation designed to stop bombing and riots" and his record on the environment, senior citizens, and education.⁸⁸ Nixon said more Republicans were needed in Congress to bring an "honorable end" to the Vietnam War, maintain America's international presence, and halt "permissiveness, pornography, and busing." The heavily Democratic congressional majorities soon prompted Nixon to claim an "ideological" majority, a bipartisan coalition of "conservatives" and "moderates" to pass his programs.⁸⁹ Critical of dissenting youth, Nixon reminded the "silent majority" in St. Petersburg that the "impossible dream in most countries is possible in

83. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1970; *New York Times*, September 30, 1988.

84. *Miami Herald*, October 14, 1970.

85. *Ibid.*, October 8, 14, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 14, 15, November 1, 1970.

86. *Miami Herald*, September 4, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 9, October 25, 1970.

87. *Miami Herald*, October 23, 1970; *New York Times*, October 27, 1970.

88. *Nixon Papers*, 950; *Facts on File* 30 (October 28, 1970), 788.

89. *Nixon Papers*, 951-56; *Miami Herald*, October 28, 1970; *New York Times*, October 28, 29, 1970.

America."⁹⁰ Making the first presidential appearance in Tallahassee since William McKinley, Nixon plugged "neighborhood schools" and renounced busing for the "sole purpose of achieving racial balance" as contrary to law and "quality education."⁹¹ Though Chiles also opposed busing, he attracted black support by belittling Cramer's antibusing amendment as "just talk" and "an emotional issue." Cramer, in turn, challenged Chiles's vote in the Florida senate to give court-imposed busing orders the "status of state law," while Chiles proposed "magnet schools" to negate busing conflicts.⁹²

Despite the Nixon-Agnew "road show," polls indicated weak Republican support. "The Republicans Are in Trouble in Florida," predicted a *New York Times* headline. On October 25, the *Miami Herald* poll placed Kirk and Cramer with 38 and 39 percent, respectively, compared to 62 and 60 percent for Askew and Chiles. The poll defined the chief issues as law and order, rebellious youth, the Vietnam War, and drugs, and found that blue-collar voters were identifying the Republicans with "inflation," then at one of the lowest levels of the forthcoming decade. Democrats further benefited from the perception of Askew and Chiles as "overnight sensations." Cramer insisted that the polls reflected only the views of the media whom, he claimed, "love those liberals."⁹³ The GOP was further weakened when partisans of George Wallace, the 1968 American Independent party presidential candidate, citing Kirk's earlier condemnations of Wallace, endorsed Askew and Chiles. Kirk had previously renounced Wallace as a "racist" and a "flaming liberal" in conspiracy with President Johnson to thwart the emergence of southern Republicanism.⁹⁴ The *St. Petersburg Times* found Kirk trailing Askew by twenty-two points in Cramer's home county of Pinellas, while Cramer led by just seven points there. The survey indicated that Kirk would receive support from 51 percent of

90. *Nixon Papers*, 962; *New York Times*, October 30, 1970.

91. *Miami Herald*, October 24, 1970; *New York Times*, October 29, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 28, 29, 1970.

92. *Miami Herald*, September 2, October 18, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 18, 1970.

93. *New York Times*, October 27, November 4, 1970; *Miami Herald*, October 25, 27, 1970.

94. Quoted in Nick Thimmesch, *The Condition of Republicanism* (New York, 1968), 239; *New York Times*, November 5, 1970; *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 2, October 2, 1970.

Republicans, while Cramer would garner 75 percent GOP backing.⁹⁵

Cramer, Gurney, and Kirk differ on reasons for the GOP losses in 1970. Besides allowing Chiles's "walk" to go unchallenged and failing to seek more debates, Cramer cites his reliance on an out-of-state public relations firm not well versed in Florida politics as factors in the defeat. Moreover, he feels that the \$350,000 spending limit in effect in Florida for the 1970 campaign only did not permit enough television exposure for minority-party candidates facing institutional obstacles. Cramer also maintains that the intraparty schism hurt his candidacy even though the GOP fared poorly all across the South in 1970.⁹⁶ Gurney blames the defeat on the failure to attract enough Democratic support. Kirk, denying the impact of the schism, insists that no Republican could have been elected in Florida that year because Askew and Chiles have re-cemented the majority coalition. Indeed, the Democrats, finding that "fresh faces and new looks outweighed age and experience," gained cross-the-board support from working-class whites, blacks, Jews, Cuban-Americans, metropolitan residents, and rural voters.⁹⁷

Cramer polled 772,817 votes, or 61,716 more than the number of registered Republicans. Chiles's 902,438 ballots, representing majorities in fifty-five counties, was 1,121,830 below the number of registered Democrats.⁹⁸ Hence, much of an apathetic electorate sat out one of Florida's most contested senatorial races. Robert Sikes contends that numerous Farris Bryant supporters may have defected to Cramer, but if that occurred, many Republicans either did not vote or bolted to Chiles. Sikes said the Kirk-Askew match had little impact on the Senate race because Kirk was a "political accident" with little control over other contests.⁹⁹ Askew won all but nine counties to defeat Kirk, 984,305 to 746,243. Cramer polled 26,574 votes more than Kirk and took the five counties that Kirk lost: Broward, Collier, Martin, Pasco, and Pinellas. Cramer ran 11,077

95. *Miami Herald*, October 4, 1970.

96. Cramer interview.

97. Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, 1971), 452.

98. Florida, *General Election Returns*, November 3, 1970.

99. Robert Sikes to author, Crestview, FL, June 1, 1987.

votes ahead of Chues in Pinellas County where registered Republicans then outnumbered Democrats by 3,059. Kirk and Cramer each won seven counties: Indian River, Lake, Manatee, Orange, Osceola, Sarasota, and Seminole, and Kirk took the two counties—Clay and St. Johns—that were lost by Cramer.¹⁰⁰

A disappointed Cramer weathered defeat in stride, having earlier told a reporter that “time and circumstance often measure a man’s future. Quite often if you aspire to something, it becomes more unattainable because you are seeking it.”¹⁰¹ Generous in defeat, Kirk vowed to make Askew’s term “as glorious as mine has been.”¹⁰² Askew said the Democrats represented a “new attitude in politics and a new confidence in the people” and hailed his party’s “willingness to take on . . . the ‘sacred cows’ frontally . . . and to set really a new tone.”¹⁰³

Two months after the general election, tensions between Cramer and Gurney resumed when pro-Cramer L. E. “Tommy” Thomas, a Panama City automobile dealer associated with the later Reagan campaigns, ousted the Gurney-endorsed Duke Crittenden of Orlando for the state chairmanship. Thereafter, three congressmen friendly with Cramer—J. Herbert Burke of Hollywood, Louis Frey of Orlando, and C. W. Young of St. Petersburg—and national committeewoman Paula Hawkins of Maitland prepared a letter to the White House urging that Cramer, not Gurney, be Florida’s patronage advisor. Gurney quickly initiated “peace” meetings with his intraparty rivals, and the letter was never mailed.¹⁰⁴ Gurney, who retired as senator in 1974 and failed in a later quest to regain his former House seat, was thereafter charged, and acquitted, of federal and state allegations involving \$300,000 in unreported campaign funds and kickbacks from federal housing contracts.¹⁰⁵

Despite talk to the contrary, Cramer never again sought public office and declined to consider appointment as a federal judge. Instead, he opened a Washington law practice. In 1973,

100. Florida, *General Election Returns*, November 3, 1970.

101. *Tampa Tribune*, June 18, 1967.

102. *Tallahassee Democrat*, November 4, 1970.

103. Quoted in Lamis, *Two-Party South*, 186; Bass and DeVries, *Transformation of Southern Politics*, 126.

104. *Tampa Tribune*, June 13, 1971; *Miami Herald*, September 26, 1971.

105. Lamis, *Two-Party South*, 293; Bass and DeVries, *Transformation of Southern Politics*, 125.

Cramer directed the confirmation team for the elevation of House Republican Leader Gerald Ford to the vice-presidency. He lobbied on behalf of several foreign governments, including that of Nicaraguan President Somoza. In 1979, he headed the first American trade mission to China after the normalization of relations. Cramer also represented the Republican National Committee when the Ripon Society unsuccessfully fought the delegate formula plan adopted in 1972 when Cramer had chaired the RNC rules committee.¹⁰⁶ In the fall of 1988, Cramer, while maintaining his Washington legal office, returned to St. Petersburg where he now practices law and is active in Tampa land development with his former aid, Jack Inscoe.

After his 1970 gubernatorial primary loss, Eckerd defeated Mrs. Hawkins for the 1974 Senate nomination but was beaten by Democrat Richard Stone when the American Independent nominee, Dr. John Grady, split the anti-Democratic vote. In a surprising move in 1978, Kirk switched allegiance to the Democrats to run again for governor after a federal court barred on technical grounds his planned independent candidacy. Even as a Democrat for the second time around, Kirk said he still twice supported Reagan and initially backed Congressman Connie Mack III, who scored a wafer-thin triumph for the United States Senate seat Chiles had unexpectedly vacated in 1988.¹⁰⁷ However, Kirk himself ran as a Democratic candidate for Chiles's seat but gained few primary votes. In 1990, Kirk again switched parties and announced his candidacy for governor as a Republican.

As governor, Reubin Askew formed a staff devoted to candidate recruitment and issues, an endeavor that helped to keep the Florida GOP in the doldrums for a full decade. Democrats became a real political party, instead of the previous "collection

106. Cramer interview; *New York Times*, December 24, 1970; Michael J. Krvzanek. *U. S.-Latin American Relations* (New York, 1985), 122-23; Jack Inscoe, telephone conversation with author, March 5, 1990.

107. Kirk interview, March 7, 1988. Though Kirk left the GOP, his son-in-law, State Senator Ander Crenshaw of Jacksonville, is an active Republican. Chiles's easy re-elections in 1976 and 1982, when he overwhelmed Dr. John Grady and State Senator Van B. Poole, respectively, made him a favorite for a fourth term in 1988 until he decided to step down. Askew briefly entered the race for the seat Chiles vacated but withdrew, citing fundraising barriers.

of individual contenders who often stood to lose, rather than gain, by endorsing each other.¹⁰⁸ Excluding Nixon's 1972 landslide and Paula Hawkins's victory for public service commissioner, the Florida GOP won no statewide races throughout the 1970s. Recovery from the Cramer-Kirk schism was indeed slow. Not until 1980 did the GOP rebound, when voters chose both Reagan electors and Mrs. Hawkins to fill Gurney's former Senate seat. She was beaten after one term in 1986 by Governor Robert "Bob" Graham, Askew's successor. Offsetting Hawkins's loss, the GOP finally regained the governorship with the election of Robert "Bob" Martinez, the state's first governor of Hispanic descent. And by 1989, as a result of regular and special elections and a Democratic defection, Florida sported a rare Republican majority in its United States House of Representatives delegation.

Florida Republicans continue to make impressive gains in voter registration. In October 1988, Republicans numbered 2,360,434, compared to 3,264,105 Democrats, 421,398 independents, and a scattering claiming other affiliations. Twelve counties are majority Republican by registration: Brevard, Charlotte, Collier, Indian River, Lake, Lee, Manatee, Martin, Orange, Pinellas, Sarasota, and Seminole. Between 1986 and 1988, Republican ranks swelled by 321,603 voters, while Democratic registration increased by just 49,352. For the first time, Republican registration trails the Democrats by fewer than 1,000,000 voters. Between October 1988, and April 1989, about 44,000 new voters registered as Republicans, in contrast to only 18,000 as Democrats. In the spring of 1989 the GOP was out-registering the Democrats nearly 6,500 to 1,000.¹⁰⁹ Republican potential in Florida had been particularly encouraging at the be-

108. Tebeau, *History of Florida*, 452. For a look at Askew's racial policies, see David Campbell and Joe R. Feagin, "Black Politics in the South: A Descriptive Analysis," *Journal of Politics* 37 (February 1975), 129-62.

109. Florida, *County Voter Registration*, October 1988; *Human Events* 49 (May 20, 1989), 2, quoting from Hastings Wyman's *The Southern Political Report*. Of the twelve counties with a majority of registered Republicans, only Cramer's home county of Pinellas voted against 1988 GOP senatorial nominee Connie Mack of Cape Coral. Pinellas gave Mack 47 percent, but the Democratic counties of Escambia (Pensacola), Bay (Panama City), and Duval (Jacksonville), all of which had stood firmly with Chiles and Askew in 1970, supported Mack who won by fewer than 34,000 votes (out of more than 4,065,000 cast) over Democratic Congressman Kenneth "Buddy" MacKay of Ocala.

ginning of the 1970s until the divisive schism between partisans of Claude Kirk and William Cramer sidetracked the possibility that one day the GOP might become the state's majority party. Republicans at the time were numerically weak, held few congressional seats, and lacked the breadth and depth essential to sustain a future majority party. The legacy of the 1970 campaign rests with the squandering of opportunity, often one of the most precious commodities in politics. A minority party mistakenly presumed it could function— quite prematurely and falsely as it turned out— like a majority party. After the 1970 schism, the GOP began once again to accept defeat as natural and inevitable, particularly when noncontroversial moderates equipped with favorable media coverage and sheer political skill kept Democrats in power by secure margins. But with time, Floridians rediscovered the benefits of the two-party system and demonstrated a willingness to reconsider Republicans for statewide leadership. The lessons of the Cramer-Kirk schism rest with the need to nurture firm political roots and eschew intraparty squabbles that work to enhance the opposition.