

In the wake of the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake and the southern California wildfires of 1993, California experiences more natural disasters in January 1995 when rainstorms cause flooding that kills 11 people and leaves 3,000 others homeless. Flooding is so high in Santa Barbara, fun-seeking teenagers dive off a freeway overpass into 15 feet of water. President Clinton declares 34 counties federal disaster areas.

In 1994, the U.S. registers a one-year population growth of 2.7 million. One-third of the increase is due to immigration, the largest such influx since 1914.

Author and humanities professor, Ralph Ellison, dies at age 80. His 1952 novel, *Invisible Man*, has been called the most powerful novel written about alienation, identity, and racism in America.

A huge increase in killings by 14- to 24-year-olds raises the nation's homicide rate, while violence blamed on preteens rocks communities nationwide. A boy, 13, is sentenced to life for strangling a four-year-old. In Chicago, an 11-year-old boy kills a 14-year-old girl and is then executed by his own gang. In Washington state a pair of 12-year-olds shoot a migrant worker.

The death of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in May 1994 marks the end of an era, a time when America was prosperous, fighting for civil rights, and heading for the moon. The former first lady is buried next to her husband, President John F. Kennedy, in Arlington National Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

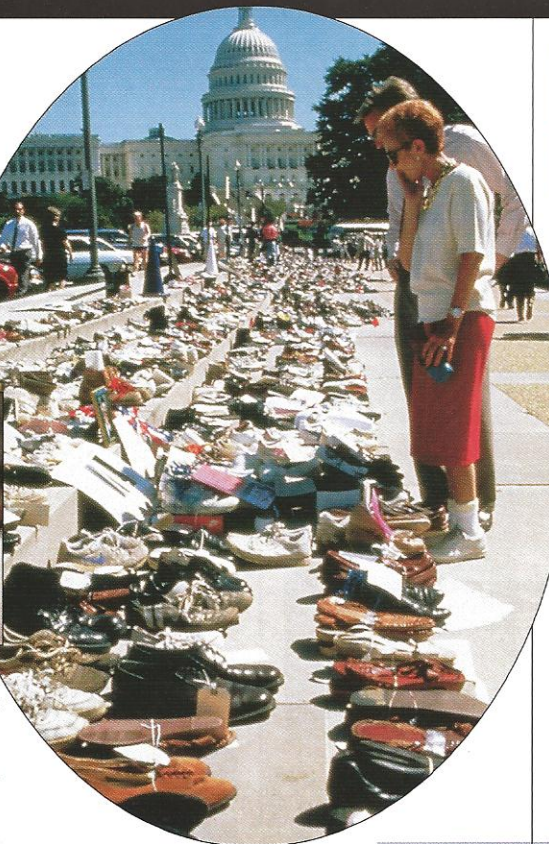


Sygma

Called the Republican revolution, November mid-term elections put the Republican party and its anti-big government platform in control of Congress for the first time in 40 years. Georgia's Newt Gingrich, author of the GOP's "Contract with America," is the new Speaker of the House.



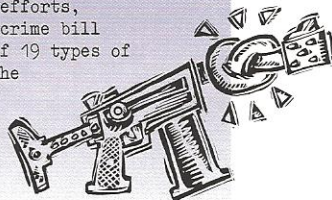
Heat, drought, and lightning combine to set Western states ablaze in late June and July. Fires consume 2,000 acres in Colorado's South Canyon when 50 mile-an-hour winds whip the flames into a firestorm, killing 14 specially trained firefighters; 10 men and four women.



Jeffrey Markowitz, Sygma

The volunteers for Silent March bring shoes from every state for one of the quietest demonstrations to ever take place in Washington, D.C. Each empty pair of shoes represents one of the more than 40,000 Americans who have been killed by handguns.

Despite powerful National Rifle Association lobby efforts, Congress passes a crime bill banning the sale of 19 types of assault weapons. The Brady Law goes into effect; in one month 23,610 people with criminal records are denied the purchase of a handgun.



AP/Wide World

The prosecution seeks the death penalty in the case of Susan Smith, who dupes the nation with a frightening tale of the abduction of her two little boys. The community's early support grows quickly to hatred when Smith confesses to murder—she sent her children to their deaths at the bottom of a lake.



AP/Wide World