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Diane D. Blair Papers (MC 1632)

1992 Clinton Presidential Campaign Interviews

Interview with M. J. (Sarge) Lozano
Campaign Position: Building Manager
Little Rock, Arkansas
October 26, 1992

Overview

Diane D. Blair was an assistant professor of political science at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, when she took a leave of absence to serve as a senior researcher in Governor Bill Clinton's presidential campaign. Approximately one month before the November election, Blair obtained permission from the governor to conduct interviews with participants in the Clinton/Gore campaign. In her own words, ". . . I had two major purposes in mind: first, simply to preserve for posterity an accomplished campaign organization that would essentially disappear on election day; and second, through discussions with campaign workers from all departments, to see what those on the inside believed to be the key ingredients of the campaign's success." She prepared a list of questions and began interviewing people as schedules allowed.

After Blair's death in 2000, her husband, Jim Blair, donated her personal and professional papers to Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries. M. J. (Sarge) Lozano reviewed this transcript and granted permission to make this interview available to scholars, students, and researchers. The final document may contain edits requested by the interviewee. This transcript was processed as part of the Diane D. Blair Papers and prepared for publication by the editorial staff of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History.

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[Beginning of Interview]

Diane Blair: Sarge, your title is what?

Sarge Lozano: Well, it's not a résumé title. It's sort of a working title. Basically, I call myself the building manager. And also the shipping and receiving manager.

DB: What were you doing before this started?

SL: Before this campaign started, I was sitting at home just watching TV and getting dumb.

DB: And then the call came?

SL: And then about August the twentieth as I recall, 1991. Craig said, "Sarge, you know where the old paint store was?" And I said, "Sure, I just closed it down about three months ago." And he said, "Well, we got to open it up again." I said, "Okay, I'll be there, when?" "Now." So we went down there and started cleaning the paint store and getting it ready for the exploratory committee.

DB: So you were part of the first step?

SL: Right. It was Craig—Craig Smith, Matt Gorman, myself, and David Watkins and Bruce Lindsey, that's five of us.

DB: And Bill Clinton?

SL: Well, he came down one time, yes. After we got it open, he came down a couple of weeks later.

DB: And now here you are. This is your third building? How big is it?

SL: I would have to guess about 90,000 square feet that we occupy. It's a lot more in it,

but we don't occupy it all.

DB: What would be the maximum number of people we have had here on staff? I know there's a lot of flow, come and go.

SL: Yes, a lot of volunteers and lots of come and goes. I would say about 350 to 400 is the basic strength that has been the last four or five months.

DB: What had you done previously that prepared you to do this?

SL: I had worked with Bill Clinton's campaigns since 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1990. In the same circumstances usually, not circumstances but same categories basically.

DB: Tell me ordinarily in a day how it begins, how it ends.

SL: Well, it's part of my building management deal. We have a janitorial staff that comes in at night to clean up the place. They come in, I guess, about 11:00 and work until it is clean. And my first duty in the morning, of course, is to walk through to make sure the place was cleaned. And I find quite often that it wasn't cleaned, so I have to call them back in here to do their job and to do their job properly. I make a review of the whole building. That's the first thing I do every morning, make sure that it is healthy and sanitary. After that, of course, about 8:30 the people start coming in and we run to the post office and get the mail, make distributions—

DB: How much mail is coming in now?

SL: Now I would say about ten thousand letters and packages a day. Of course, as I recall, in August of 1991 we were doing good if we got about fifteen to twenty letters a day.

DB: Right. And hoping there was a check in them.

SL: And usually there was a check in them—true, true, in our exploring for the exploratory committee.

DB: Okay. So you get the mail.

SL: Get the mail, make distributions, and also we get the airfreight from three different airfreight people. The Airborne people is our primary carrier, then Federal Express delivers a lot of mail here, and United Parcel Service delivers a lot of parcels in here most every day. This is a daily operation, of course. Make distribution of all these packages. I don't necessarily make the distributions, but I supervise and make sure they do get to the right place.

DB: Right. How many people are in your department now?

SL: The areas that I control under my supervision is one, two, three, four, five, six—six people. And that's on a daily basis. Of course, not counting the janitorial staff—they're on a contract, and the security is on contract, too.

DB: So that would be a lot more. Because this must be one of the largest enterprises in Arkansas now.

SL: I would imagine.

DB: From your perspective, what has made this campaign so effective?

SL: Well, cooperation. And the youngsters that come in here from throughout the country, just young folks. If they were all my age, it would be very cranky like I am. And they all love me because I am cranky, but I think that young, energetic group we're getting, right out of college, and still college students, they're just gung ho, they want to see Bill Clinton up front. And they're very cooperative. Of course, once in a while we get a little argument, but they listen to Sarge after a while.

DB: Would you describe this as a tightly organized organization or loosely organized? Is it clear to you in your own mind where the real power and authority is and who takes orders from whom?

SL: Honestly, I don't. And I've been advocating this all along, actually for over a year now, that I think we should have what—maybe I'm too militaristic, which I am a military retiree, but I'd like to see an organization chart where every individual stands and for every function within the organization stands, so we can see mostly what functions, but this has never appeared. We take it for granted where it is and I hope that that's where it is.

DB: You would know on some things, wouldn't you? Like budget, or is that also kind of divided?

SL: It's not that loose, and we watched for a while and, I mean, people were spending very, very loosely, but I think it is under control now. They have finally appointed a budget director and purchasing agents—everybody was purchasing whatever they wanted whenever they wanted. They picked up the phone and started ordering and nobody knew who ordered—why, when, or anything—and all of a sudden, you got a whole warehouse full of stuff, and you didn't have a warehouse to put it in.

DB: What in all of this was your personal low point?

SL: I honestly never had a low point. I visualized an awful lot of low points at one time when it was very critical for Mr. Clinton, but I didn't see it that way and I just kept pushing. I said, "It will blow over."

DB: What has been your most exciting and satisfying moment?

SL: Well, I cannot really point out a single or a half-dozen situations, but, of course, it isn't routine by any matter. As you well know, every day is a new day, and as the old saying goes, just like a goose, you wake up in a new world every day and look around and see what's going to happen. And that's basically what I usually wait for—let's see what's going to explode today so I can try to subside it and carry on. Go with it.

DB: When were you certain that Clinton would get the presidential nomination?

SL: In my personal opinion, I always thought he was going to be the nominee.

DB: From the day he announced?

SL: From the day he announced—from the day—and from the day he rejected it in 1988, because I know he was coming back, and from then on I jumped on the train and I just went along with it and I figured there's no way he's not going to win the nomination. He had some good, strong competition with some of the people in the Democratic Party, but I think he was the winner all the way.

DB: And did you feel the same way about his winning the presidency? When did you begin thinking, "He's really got it"?

SL: I always thought that Bill was going to make it right on through, from day one. From October the third, 1991, until today, I still think he's going to be president November 4 and I think he's going to take the chair—what is it, January 15? Whenever it is.

DB: And then four years from now you're going to have to go to Washington and run one of these deals, or do you think he'll come back to Little Rock for his reelection?

SL: I think he's going to come back here four years from now.

DB: It was a smart choice—

SL: Yes, it certainly was. I never had an idea that he would even consider Dallas or Atlanta or New York or Washington—I always thought that this was his starting point and this was where he owed his people gratitude for it, and staying here.

DB: What is it that you want to make certain that the future understands about this campaign?

SL: Well, that it was a successful campaign, and that the leader was Bill Clinton, and, of course, I have always admired the man. I saw him pretty low a couple of times—between times. And I had a chance to observe him, and I figured he would come out strong and he did.

[End of Interview]

[Reviewed and edited by Pryor Center staff]