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## **Diane D. Blair Papers (MC 1632)**

### **1992 Clinton Presidential Campaign Interviews**

Interview with Paul Sullivan

Campaign Position: Deputy Campaign Manager, Special Projects

Little Rock, Arkansas

October 22, 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. Paul Sullivan 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: Paul, what is your title?

Paul Sullivan: I guess the title is deputy campaign manager for special projects.

DB: And is that what you were when you came on to the campaign?

PS: It kind of grew into that. Started off being a deputy to Wilhelm's work, odds and ends, and then he said, "Well, why don't you just do special projects, that's what we'll call this."

DB: And what were you doing immediately before you came to the campaign?

PS: Real estate development, Hawaii.

DB: But you have done presidential campaigns before?

PS: I haven't missed one in twenty years. I started the same time Hillary and Bill were doing Texas in 1972. Karen and I were doing California for McGovern in 1972. So we go back twenty years. In 1976, Hillary was almost my deputy in Illinois. In fact, I was talking to Hillary and a friend of mine named Elmer Cooper walked up and waved to me, and Hillary had been introduced to me just five minutes before this as a possible deputy. I was supposed to talk to her to see if there was a good feeling about the relationship we were going to have, a good personality match. And Cooper grabbed me and said, "They were going to have me do Oregon. I don't want to do Oregon, why don't I just come with you to Illinois?" And I said, "You got a deal." And then Hillary went and worked for Doug Coulter, a good friend of mine in Indiana. So she was almost my deputy.

DB: What exactly is it that you do?

PS: Well, special projects is a series of tasks that were given over a length of time. One is to coordinate counterevents operations against Bush, and to some extent Quayle. Nothing that you wouldn't be proud to see in the print of a newspaper, nothing that is dirty tricks or anything like that. The idea was to clutter stuff. The idea was to use humor. Actually it grew out of a conversation I had with Wilhelm where we talked about the 1988 campaign and how it was really necessary to not let these guys go in and lie about Governor Clinton's record, and to get into their schedule in such a way that the truth was told, or if they were lying or distorting that we got that word out.

DB: The idea of a truth squad is not novel.

PS: Well, the truth squad is really—it either precedes or succeeds the schedule. A lot of times you want to get into it because that's when the national media is following it, so the idea is to step into his event in such a way that the national media covers your message that he is lying about you and you are pointing out lying, or as it turned out when he is chicken to debate you point out he is chicken to debate. From that came a concept I kind of drew up and presented to Wilhelm whereby we would try to gather the resources of the coordinated campaign through the DNC, keep a large part of the operation generic so that we could budget it to the DNC. Keep a small part of it nongeneric, for which we kept a very small pool of money, and to get teams of humor writers from both the west coast and the east coast competing against each other for good gag lines and jokes that we could put on signs with a very quick turnaround time. My conviction was that humor was the way to one, get in the story, and two, if you can get people laughing at the president, he's dead. So that's

why Chicken George was invented, “Read my beaks,” all that stuff from a group of pink slips—well, actually I’m not too sure of the pink slips, sometimes it is not clear to me who came up with some of these ideas. For example, Santa Claus was a natural. We did it, but other people concurrently tell about it. I think actually pink slips came from the field in Ohio. But we had a mechanism after several weeks of operating out of Washington that could get a good idea throughout the country in such a way that we had professional people matched up with professional people to implement it so that we could make it happen. It’s one thing to have an idea, it’s another thing to really make it happen, to present it in such a way that the media picks it up.

DB: Can you give me an example of that?

PS: Well, the way we designed it, one of my convictions—which is the project I originally wanted to do in the campaign for a lot of reasons—was that there were tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of volunteers in the country that would work for the campaign and that we wouldn’t have to cost you any money. It could actually be a money-making proposition, because of the way the coordinated campaign law is drafted. And from that idea, as soon as I got into this counterschedule operation, I said to myself well, I should prove that. So, what I did is I went to my Rolodex from past campaigns, called several people who were not involved in the campaign because they’re older or they had children to raise, and they couldn’t drop whatever they were doing and quit and come aboard. And from that process on that Rolodex, I got into other people’s Rolodexes. I went to four or five of the past national campaign managers that have run national campaigns

before, some friends of mine. I called them and they went through their Rolodexes, and we came up with 700 professionals throughout the country that agreed to form teams so that these teams would lie in wait for Bush to come into their town and these teams of advance people and political organizers and press people would build what I call a shadow organization that wouldn't pull from resources in the campaign. That was the idea, not to pull from resources on the ground, because we couldn't have that many resources—not to cost any money at all—all free. The people would drop whatever they were doing at twenty-four hours' notice, give us three days of their time to develop their team long before they were needed.

DB: When you get the word that he's going to Highpoint, North Carolina—

PS: When you get the word that it's a go. Right. And it gave us an ability to be ready very fast. Combined with the west and east coast humor teams, which are very famous people and write for *Saturday Night Live* and have written film scripts, and screenwriters, and some of the best funny people in the country. It was fairly easy once you get an idea that's working to get the humor part of it done, to have a nerve center out of Washington, D.C., to control the whole operation, the generic part of it, coordinate that part with my little shop downstairs. The operation is much bigger than my little shop. And then to follow the print, have a good intelligence operation to watch the wire services, listen to the news.

DB: The GOP Watch?

PS: Well, actually the last two months we've been giving stuff to the GOP Watch rather than the other way around because we developed an ability. Once people learn you're there and you can provide services to them, they pay attention to any rumors

and they feed you information right away. So it's sort of a symbiotic relationship. So that whole thing really worked out very well. And we developed an expertise—a mini-quick team of experienced advance people that we sent around the country—two weeks of their own time and we paid their expenses—that became proficient at getting into the event, at seeing the right angles, at seeing the mistakes in security arrangements so that they can get the masks in. That's why Chicken George got into some of the events. That's why Chicken George got in the debate with George Bush. That's why George Bush got mad at Chicken George, is because we got him in. Now we've got Pinocchios following him all over the country and he's going crazy because everywhere he goes, there's Pinocchio and we're telling everybody the man's lying. He is lying. And the people need to be told. So, the concept was to use the national media and the local media to follow him and get into the story so that he may get twenty paragraphs, but we get six or seven inside that where they talk about, "But at that event was Chicken George, once again challenging him to debate." So you use his money, you piggyback on all his resources—and almost for free. And you find out what his message is going to be by listening to the newspapers and listening to state party Republicans—when George Bush is coming to a town to talk about blah, blah. And within twenty-four hours you have twenty lines above blah, blah. So you can, you know, get into it in a hurry, get it out there, get it on signs, sneak the signs in, and you hit him back with a message that you want. And that's really been fun. It's one of the most fun jobs I've ever done.

DB: The people involved must just think they've died and gone to heaven.

PS: It's incredible. The lead advance guy right now that's doing it is Jim King. He's very famous. He is probably, on the Democratic side, the most famous advance person in the country. He dropped what he was doing and he is having the greatest time. It's the first time he's ever done counterevent. He's an advance for those big rallies, millions of persons rallies.

DB: Has this ever been done?

PS: Never. Nothing like this. It was a brand-new idea.

DB: Where did it come from?

PS: It was my idea. I mean, it kind of grew as one step led to another, and it's really worked because it's been fun.

DB: Well, I've noticed how many times at night in the "War Room" when they were reporting on the day's events, our people are shrieking with laughter and glee and applause.

PS: We've had some cases where people have disrupted the president's speech. We try to train people not to do that. While you disrupt his speech, there's a negative feeling from that. There's a bad feeling. So we try to tell people, "Let the words and the signs speak. Let the Pinocchio mask faces just speak."

DB: Do you have something special in mind for Halloween?

PS: Well, actually we were thinking about it, but unfortunately Halloween is the thirty-first, right? We're shutting down on the thirtieth because all of our people—we've got about 700 people now—they're all going over to GOTV. So we're integrating it into the Get Out the Vote effort. So Halloween would have been fun, but it's more important to get into the most important thing.

DB: And most of these are volunteers?

PS: There's only one paid person in the whole operation. And they're all good—we're talking about older people. We got people from LBJ's White House. We got a whole bunch of Carter folks. We got some of the real old-time advance people.

DB: Was it hard to get them or were they dying to help?

PS: Dying to help.

DB: Dying to win, don't you think that's part of it?

PS: Dying to win and also, see, Bill Clinton is so well respected out there. He's been there. He's been around and he's a guy that's helped people through the years and been open. I called people in Gary Hart's campaign and Hollings' campaign, Jesse Jackson's campaign manager. And I never got turned down. Not once. And you get 700 names of people who went out—now all of them weren't used because we had people in cities that we never used. We got into—which was really kind of an unintended result response—we got into what I call “counter-counterevents” sort of like the anti-antimissile. We would find out that the Bush people were ready to do a counterevent, and we would get a warning from the state. They'd see the White House or they'd see the Bush/Quayle advance people at one of our advance sites, setting up a counterevent, and we would just have a SWAT team. In fact, the advance people call us the SWAT team. You know Susan Thomases' people? Because they'll call us and say the Bush people are going to screw an event up for us, and we'll send our SWAT teams in—provide extra security. You know, cordon it off. We had one event—it was—Valdosta, Georgia—we got warning about twelve hours in advance that the Bush people were going to try to screw the event

up, and by the time the event happened, we had all of Jimmy Carter's people in the state, we had the lieutenant governor helping, we had a whole network of people to build a bigger crowd and we had a mechanism set up to, what I call, "flip the event." What we were going to do is if the Bush people came early—their crowd, we were going to let them get to the front, fold up and let them come in to the front, so they'd think they were at the front where the podium was. Then we were going to flip it. We were going to surround them with our folks and we had the advance team ready and we had tons of advance people coming up from Jacksonville, Florida. We'd take down the podium, move the whole thing the other way, and then the Bush people would be in the back of the crowd, we would be in the front. We'd just flip it. And we'd take the bus and bring it around the back street. And we had it all ready to go, but by the time that happened, the Bush people got scared off. They saw what was going on. We had the high school football team, we had the lumberyard workers out there to spike security. So it's really fun. You got to move a lot of troops around and it's really fun.

DB: This campaign is now being described as the most effective presidential campaign organization in recent American history. What from your perspective, made this campaign so effective?

PS: The easy answer is the economy. If the economy were in great shape, we'd be in a real tough race. I don't know if we'd be ahead. But let me tell you what I think are the good qualities of the campaign and the bad ones—the pros and cons. The pros in the campaign are really good ones. I've never seen so many talented people in the right positions. I've never seen a campaign faster and more oriented towards what

really counts in today's presidential campaigns, which is the message and the media. There's more positive things, but that's the biggest ones. You have the right people in the right jobs by and large, and the design of the campaign is designed for the '90s. It is very, very fast in responding. It's incredibly good at using free media. On the negative side—and the negatives obviously don't count for a whole lot—there are too many city halls, there's not a command structure. It's difficult to get efficient decisionmaking. We've missed a lot of opportunities because of that. I believe a national campaign in a lot of ways is like going to war, and you've really got to have an efficient command structure. And this campaign has an abysmal one. Another positive thing I'd like to say about the campaign—I think David Wilhelm and Eli Segal are—David Wilhelm is the nicest campaign manager on the face of the earth. And that is sort of like a catching thing. It spreads. It's contagious. And he is so well liked, and I've known tons of national campaign managers and never seen anything like that.

DB: David Wilhelm stops and he says, “Good morning,” he says, “How are you . . . ?”

PS: And he means it. And Eli Segal's the same way. They're quite a pair. And between the two of them, they set a tone that I find incredibly refreshing at the very top of the campaign like that. And I would also say that while a decentralized command structure, I think, by and large is a very strong negative overall, there is something to be said for collegiate leadership and there is a sense of that in the campaign that's very, very positive. They get together, think it through, make decisions. And with decisions that can be made over a four- or five-day period, it's a better system. In

decisions that have to be made quickly, it's really a bad system. We're very, very lucky that it hasn't cost us more than it has.

DB: When you read the accounts in the press there is constant contrast between us and Dukakis. They didn't respond. Our responses are on the wire even before the hit has been made.

PS: Well, it's only that fast on the message, which is the most important part of the campaign. It's very fast, and very pointed towards that, designed for that. There is no waiting period on that. There is a very quick turnaround: you know that George Bush lies about this and before the words are out of his mouth, you hit him with the lie. And believe me, from me who has suffered so long in the vineyards to have a campaign that kicks and fights back is like going to heaven. In their face. And to do the ground operation part that I'm doing with the counterschedule and stuff, it's just wonderful to be part of that because you get to hit them back and they deserve it. The kind of campaigns that the Republicans have run over the last twelve years have been horrible. They've done serious damage to the body politic and people's opinions of politicians. They are not nice people. These guys are bad people. They're very dangerous people. They're working on elections with totally different motives than I do, and it's nice to beat them and I hope we do. It looks like we're doing it. It's nice to be part of a campaign that understands that when somebody hits you, the most important thing to do right away is hit them back.

DB: And where did that come from?

PS: Well, I'm not too sure that I can judge the cast of characters that created it. I have some understanding of the beginnings of the campaign, but I think there are people

at the top of the campaign that learned lessons in 1984 and 1988 very well. I think Carville's personality is very healthy for the campaign. The kind of feeling he gives off has helped the sense of go for the jugular and don't let these sons of bitches get away with this. Concentrate. And if you get hit and it drags down, get up and hit them two, three, four, five, six times and if he's knocked down, kick him. And that's a very, very healthy thing for Democrats to have. And one of my little pet sayings in this business is that Democrats run presidential campaigns based on the way people should vote and Republicans run presidential campaigns based on the way people vote. And so they have a tremendous advantage. Well, this is the first campaign that I've been in that understands that, to a large degree, what the American people want in a president is a fighter. They get confused on the issues. They really don't know about who's right or wrong, because statistics get confusing and all that stuff. There's always kind of distortions that go on and they don't really know what to believe. But one thing they know in their hearts, they may not even say it in the poll, is when they drive to work in the morning they want the president of the United States to wake up and go to the oval office and fight for them. Right? Stand up to the Russians or stand up to the bad guys or take care of Washington. What the Republicans have realized for a long time—the 1988 campaign is a classic example—is the American people want a fighter. Going into the 1988 campaign with Dukakis right after the Democratic convention, it was George Bush who was the wimp and it was like Dukakis who was the Greek-immigrant son, fighter, and they took that and flipped it around and turned it into George Bush's strength. They

did it with flags and cops and military and blah, blah, blah this and Willie Horton that.

DB: There were a few self-inflicted wounds.

PS: Oh, talk about a bad candidate—good guy, nice guy, but he was a terrible candidate.

DB: Did you know that when Clinton was defeated in 1980, which was a scalding experience, he did not immediately fight back? In every election after that, the minute the hit came, we didn't have time for tea. He would have radio out all over the state instantly fighting back.

PS: A campaign experience reflection, and it also reflects his personality. He likes people. He's very collegial. He forgives his enemies very fast, and mostly that's good—but recognize how that can hurt you. And maybe that's why we have a campaign structure that's a little bit too decentralized for my taste.

DB: Have you ever asked for an organization chart?

PS: I would love to ask for one because it's impossible. Nobody could draw me one. And it took me three weeks to figure out that there wasn't any city hall, it was as if there were six or seven of them. And that's an opportunity. There's a lot of vacuum in that situation. You slip in and just make the wrong decisions and go. And I just take a piece of it.

DB: But you do miss opportunities?

PS: Yes, I've been very frustrated to see them go by.

DB: If your operation has a great idea—it's exciting, it's interesting, it's funny—but there are some risks and you need somebody to say go for it, who do you go to?

PS: Your choices are two. You try to figure out who to go to and realizing that if you get a yes from that person, it may not last long enough to get it done. Or you just do it. You see, that's part of the advantage and the disadvantage. You just go ahead and do it because there's nobody in charge, you know. If everybody's in charge, nobody's in charge, and you just go ahead and do it. But that's very dangerous. We've been very lucky. The economy has really helped. I shouldn't have said that so simplistically. There's really this strong undercurrent that really is deeper than just the economic situation. That the country is seriously on the wrong track and it's really time to look at something new, a new way of approaching things. George Will—who I love to read and I disagree with so strongly—said two years ago in an article, “Watch out, Republicans, look what happened to Winston Churchill.” When people don't focus on the foreign threat, the external threat, they turn inward and try to focus on their own problems. And George Bush, he said in this article, was very, very weak on that. That's two full years ago he said that and he was absolutely right. And I started preaching that sermon.

DB: When did you become a Clinton person?

PS: I guess actually I've been a Clinton person for a long time. Carl Wagner came to Karen and I in 1988 and told me that there was a core group around Governor Clinton trying to get him to run then and to keep my powder dry and not get involved. So I waited for a while because I've always been an admirer of his. But we actually became Clinton persons in December of 1991 or January of 1992, right around there. And we called and got in touch with Wilhelm and told him that we wanted to volunteer, told him we'd fly in at our expense and we flew in and sat

down with him and, as I say, I love him, he's just the most gregarious, wonderful—just genuinely a nice person. And we had a great meeting with him. And he said, “Well, basically what do you want to do?” And I said, “Let me just draw up a proposal.” So we drew up this proposal for him, and our contention was that we could build a volunteer grassroots organization by going into the states and meet two weeks or a week before the primary caucuses and begin to set up an organization the very moment when the organization was the strongest and most vital; and there wasn't a lot of money then to put in these organizations, so basically a fairly small field operation in that state. We would train people—no paid people, totally volunteer—how to raise money in small amounts and how to build the organization toward the fall campaign and use that organization to help the later primaries and caucuses through handwritten letters to the states and recruiting volunteers, all self-funded. No money. No negative to the campaign at all. And we laid it out in a memo and everybody said, “Yes.” It was a great idea. They loved it. So, we went back to Hawaii and then New Hampshire happened and then after New Hampshire we kept trying to get everybody to say, “When do you want us?” We couldn't get anyone to focus on it because one thing happened at a time. So there was a period of time from February through May, four full months where we couldn't get anybody to say yes. And we got really ticked because we were offering our time for free and we were convinced we could build this organization for free. So we had a buddy in Miami named Bill Mock who had worked with me in the Carter Administration, and he knew of our efforts to try to get into the campaign and try to do this, and he said, “Fly down to Miami and try your experiment.” So we went to Miami in late May

and Karen and I put together this organization which became People to People, named itself when we were there. We spent three weeks there and we started with fifty volunteers. We were volunteers. Well, we got one hundred people that actually joined, of which fifty were real. And it was sort of like a club. You had to pay twenty bucks to get in. We had agreed to try to raise a minimum amount of money every two weeks, which was like fifty cents or it was ten bucks or it was thirty bucks—didn't make any difference. The idea was you had to contribute so much and you could raise it, it didn't have to be your money. And we tried to train people how to raise money in small amounts. They now have thirteen offices open in Dade County, they have \$35,000 in the bank the last time I talked to them down there. They have more than 1,000 volunteers—no paid staff, not one paid person in the operation. They are feeding money into the coordinated campaign. They can't raise money for Clinton, so we proved that the idea could work. We went back, and meanwhile Eli comes aboard the campaign. So they call me and they say, "What do you want to do in the campaign?" And I said, "Whatever you want me to do. But let me sit down with you guys and find out what's going on and offer my proposal. And if you don't like that proposal, tell me what you want me to do." So they said, "Great, wonderful, what are your plans?" So, I said, "Well, I've got to go back to Hawaii, got a real estate development business I got to pay attention to." And I said, "So you guys will call me?" "Yes, we will." And I kind of laughed and they said, "No, no." Wilhelm said, "I will, I will, I will." So, I went back to Hawaii. Same thing started happening—nothing happens. I mean, essentially there's a series of sort of semiconversations occurring. And then I'm starting to feel like, "Whoa." So

the convention occurs, and it's the first time I've missed a convention. I didn't want to go without a job. It was a good convention. So, Wilhelm calls me and says—this is a week after the convention—and he said, “I want you to come to Little Rock and I want you to run a nationwide volunteer effort”—music to my ears. So, I came to Little Rock two weeks after the convention. And Eli had a file full of proposals of how to do a volunteer operation, so I went through them and no money. And it became very apparent that nobody wanted to put any resources into this, so I tried to find a way to do it with no campaign money. We go back to Hawaii and the whole thing gets taken up because the bureaucratic—the field wants to do this part. And they won't let you do this. And they didn't want the 800 number. The whole thing was scrapped and I lose it and I am absolutely convinced today this is one of the missed opportunities. I know it in my heart, because I saw it happen in Dade County. But the positive stuff in this campaign way outweighs the negative.

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

PS: That the good guy won and that he won by doing the right thing. You know, that he did more than advance himself. That he found a way to beat the bad guys without lowering himself to their standards. But fighting back is not bad. A presidential campaign is like a prizefight. You can fight fair and beat the dirty guy, but it's a fight—it's a fight. You have to fight to win, but you can do it using the good. Good is much more powerful than bad. I'm one of these idealist people we talked about. And that's really true. For all the mistakes we made, one of the major reasons that Bill Clinton is winning is because people are beginning to understand that,

intrinsically, with all the problems in his personal life that he's had and he's talked about, that this is a good man, and it's starting to come through. And that he's a tough man. That he can take it. He deserves to be president.

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

PS: When he took the hits. I think to my way of thinking he became the front-runner four or five days after Gennifer Flowers—and maybe it was a mix of the draft letter then and the Gennifer Flowers. Because I saw the way that the campaign reflecting him was standing up and saying bullshit, and I said to myself, “We got ourselves a guy who's not going to take this stuff.”

DB: You said after California it was clear he was the nominee, but remember we weren't going anywhere.

PS: The focus went somewhere else. And when the focus goes completely off you, I mean, you can't raise money, you can't—nobody's paying attention to you. It's almost as good in politics to be paid attention to if you're doing bad things as good, because at least the focus is on you. It's not really an analogy, but there is a period of time when George Bush, after he selected Dan Quayle in 1988, all the focus was on Bush and Quayle. Bush and Quayle. There was no focus on Dukakis, and our numbers dropped. And it was all negative stories about Bush selecting Quayle. It was amazing. And one of the theories was you've got to be in the story, there's got to be something about you going on. I think when Jerry Brown was beat up in New York, it was a big event. The finishing rounds are beginning then. After that it was obvious because the media always wants to write the other story. They want to write a Comeback Kid story. So they write the Comeback Kid and it's Bill Clinton. Then

they want to write the next Comeback Kid. They always want the giant to fall, so there's these yin and yang stories going on. But when Bill Clinton came back and did so well in New York and fought—that was a vicious, vicious, tough, tough thing. That was the time when he was coming out and fighting. The reason I'm doing what I do, and Karen—and we come back every four years, and shut our business down—is because McGovern, in his concession speech to Richard Nixon, asked the people, the young people who were involved in his campaign not to despair of the process, to stay involved, and to change the country from within. And Karen and I went back to Hawaii and we were crushed, and we tried to figure out what we would do to stay involved. We decided that every four years we would come back and find somebody we could believe in and try to get him into the White House. And I have the five-by-eight cards he actually wrote out his concession speech to Richard Nixon. He gave them to me as a gift. And on November 7, twenty years to the day, we're giving those back to him as a gift and we're having all the people that stayed involved that didn't drop out write letters to him.

DB: Tell me about the good Republicans you organized.

PS: Never, ever in my experience—my first campaign really was Bobby Kennedy in 1968, so let's count from 1968 on—I haven't seen a Democratic candidate get support from Republicans the way that Bill Clinton is getting support from Republicans. This is really historic.

DB: And how do you explain it?

PS: Well, for the same reason the kids are turning out. There's a sense of change in the air. There's this kind of sense that we need something real and that the Bush thing is

so narrow and divisive and negative and that's the only way they know how to run campaigns. And there's a turning away from that. The Houston convention was an abomination for many Republicans. Right now I have on a list of paper—I know this has never happened before in modern history for a Democrat—I have an ex-governor, three ex-congress people, ready to endorse. I have two former cabinet members. I have a slew of sub-cabinet members. All Republicans now. I have twenty people from what's called Republican National Party positions, from people who helped the deputy convention manager for 1988, people in the 1988 campaign for George Bush, central committee members and national committee members, Republican National Committee. Mayors. State senator. Couple of state reps. You know, I'm talking Republicans now. The list goes on. They're ready to announce these people. Never has that happened. There's a groundswell of support out there from what one of the congressmen calls "Abraham Lincoln Republicans," who are disgusted at what they see is happening to their own party. And the choice issue—a lot of women coming over. Another thing we're doing is the Perot thing. We're responsible for tracking Perot, researching him, doing an analysis of his organization, bringing people aboard.

DB: Do you think we ought to start taking him on?

PS: We have to make that decision probably tomorrow. We had a meeting today with Stanley Greenberg and George Stephanopoulos and about twenty other people from this office, and we decided to wait twenty-four more hours and see how the more significant numbers come in and the cross-tabs so we can analyze where this is coming from. There's a sense that that's peaking, and my bet is, if it's peaking,

leave it alone because the thing that we have to remember is what the Bush people did to Perot last time, which drove the Perot people into our arms. And Bush started attacking him today. Now having said that, if the numbers continue, we've got to hit him. And we've got to remember the fighter in the ring analogy again.

DB: What was the campaign's low point?

PS: There were two points where I was very worried about the campaign. Obviously in January, when both the Flowers and then the draft stuff came out. The Flowers stuff—I don't think I was quite as worried, but when the draft stuff came out it was definitely—but then I saw him talking, I believe it was on *Nightline*. And then I was never really worried about that stuff that much at that point, at least in the sense of the primaries. I figured the Republicans were going to hit us with it left and right, and to be quite honest, I don't think they have hit us with it as much as they could have. The second time was—when was it—April and May when 20 percent of the people in this country thought of us positively and 60 percent in a negative way.

DB: What do you really want history to know about this campaign?

PS: How tough it was, I guess.

DB: You think somebody's going to come back and think it was easy?

PS: Yeah. I'm sure the political writers, when they look back at this, they'll look at it and they'll say it was destiny.

DB: Because the economy was bad?

PS: It was not that bad when we got in. If people go out and vote the lever for change basically on Tuesday that's a big thing—when people are saying, “We've had twelve years of Republicans and we're going to switch now.” And people are going

to have to throw their faith in a little bit. And getting there was not easy, it was tough, and campaigns are not glamorous. It is hard work.

[End of Interview]

[Reviewed and edited by Pryor Center staff]