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Diane D. Blair Papers (MC 1632)

1992 Clinton Presidential Campaign Interviews

Interview with Susan P. Thomases

Campaign Position: Strategic Scheduler

Little Rock, Arkansas

October 31, 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. Susan P. Thomases 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.

[Beginning of Interview]

Diane Blair: Your position is?

Susan Thomases: Strategic scheduler.

DB: When did you begin doing that?

ST: I started doing that in June or July—confirmed in July, but I was actually doing it in June because right after the California primary it became clear that the scheduling part of this campaign was not working right. Hillary and Bill's schedules were not in sync. It hadn't been in sync in much of the primaries. And so in July, Bill and Hillary decided that what they needed was for me to help coordinate their schedules and the schedules of the VP candidate and his spouse.

DB: How do you coordinate these four schedules when everybody in the world wants them to come?

ST: Well, let me step back—the larger thing and then this particular campaign. I've done scheduling before. It is a gift that I have in politics. And I can't tell you where I got it. There are a lot of people who have a gift for advance, for doing events and making them work beautifully and everything else. My ability to conceptualize what the events should look like and the rhythm of the campaign and how you want to move the candidate and spouse to resolve the logistical, timing and pacing issues is something that I have done since 1968 when I was a deputy campaign manager for McCarthy in Oregon. I realized that we were up against the Bobby Kennedy machine and we just wanted to outfox them and it was just—I just had a gift for it. And also I have an ability to visualize what I want it to look like so that I can explain to the people who have to implement the

schedule exactly what I want them to do.

DB: You should have been a theater designer or producer.

ST: It's a little bit of that. It's not quite that artistic, but it's what message you want to send out and what you communicate by where you choose to go and how you spend your time. Because it's not just the visuals of it. I mean, I'll give you an example. During the New York primary when we were having such a hard time breaking through, Harold Ickes and I decided that we had to think of clever ways to break the media logjam. We had not done well in Connecticut and we were under enormous pressure to reassert the momentum. In many cities there are two media cycles. In New York there are at least four. And the media was really roughing Bill Clinton up pretty badly. So I said, "We have to break through." Harold's suggestion, which I thought was brilliant, was we should challenge Jerry Brown to debate every day, if necessary, wherever he wants to debate. And I thought it was a brilliant suggestion. My suggestion was that we have to do nonconventional events. We did *Donahue*. Mickey Kantor deserves credit for actually negotiating the appearance, but it was my idea that we had to do unconventional things. We did the *Imus* radio talk show, which in the New York/New Jersey area is enormously popular. And Bill has continued to do it up until yesterday when he was in New Jersey and he did an *Imus*. Ways in which people get their information that are different than they traditionally get their information. This year, 1992, was a year in which that was clearly true. And in fact the campaign had recognized that as early as New Hampshire when they put

together the town meetings for Bill in New Hampshire, which Harry produced, which were a way, again, of breaking through the traditional media logjam for him to communicate. So that's what I did. At the same time in April, I came up with the idea that he could not leave the convention by airplane. One of the things that people hated about American politics was that the president of the U.S.—when he went places—he just went where he was invited. He was invited to these places and people couldn't choose to see him. He was invited to the hardware executives or the media executives or to the Community Chest or to the Rotary Club or wherever, and he would go there and that audience, whoever it was, was an exclusive audience. But a regular citizen who heard he was coming to town could not wake up in the morning and say, "Gee, you know, I would really like to hear the president," or "I would really like to hear Bill Clinton." They couldn't do that. So the question is how do you create an environment where people can self-select whether they want to see the candidate—whether they support him or don't support him. So that was the concept that, number one, he should leave town by bus. And I must say that I investigated at the same time trains, because that had been such a popular notion. But trains no longer went where people were and trains are big and scary and people didn't come close to them. And trains, like planes, were closed entities and didn't provide flexibility. Whereas, buses could stop anywhere and travel where people were and people could get in and out. So it was that concept. David Wilhelm, it is said, came up with a similar concept two months later, and when I started organizing the

happening of it, he and I worked very closely together to determine the route because the route was, to some extent, political.

DB: Tell me about the bus trip.

ST: I had no idea what it would do to all the people who lived along the route. We tried to mix it up between city things and country things and we tried to mix up the events we planned between potluck dinners and regular crowd events and just stop—like we stopped in one of these giant truck stops. We went to a major steel mill in West Virginia and we stopped at a farm. And we changed the things that we did on every bus trip. But the outpouring of people who wanted and needed to see him—it was just incredible. It was as if this was the first time that anyone had paid any attention to them and had come to see them. And some of these places that these bus trips would do, did not have airports which could support the landing of a presidential candidate. We often found that we couldn't go places in America because our plane and our entourage couldn't get there. It also was a way of keeping this enormous press corps that traveled with him—literally, it's 150, 180 press people that travel with him—to keep them back, in a sense, so that people could really get near him. When you go into these set events, the press is on fixed risers and dominate the event and doesn't give people easy access to the candidate. It solved lots of problems. But there was no way that we could anticipate the outpouring that accompanied them.

DB: So they weren't all planned. You had one or two and then were just going to see?

ST: Originally I had planned four bus trips. I had planned a bus trip out to St. Louis—the first 1,000 miles. I had planned one up the Mississippi Valley, which was the

second one, because neither Gore nor Clinton had been in Iowa because there had been no real Iowa primary. So I sent one up the Mississippi Valley to try to lock down the upper midwest, which would lock down Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin. You know, to kind of put that into play. Then I had decided that we would probably do a bus trip through the south. We ended up not doing it from one part of the south to another because it was easier to do state bus trips there. One in North Carolina. One in Florida. One in Texas. So what I would do is I would have people drive the route and plan those bus trips and then we had them in the can. We'd have the schedule put together and then we would figure out what time slot we were going to work them into and we would then just take them out and send someone down to start working it out. And we had one bus trip we never took, which was down the valley in California because we were doing so well in California we decided not to do it.

DB: What drives schedule? Everybody wants you to come, you've got a zillion requests?

ST: No. One of the things that this campaign did that no other campaign I've ever been associated with did was we drove our own schedule. We did not respond to requests for invitations. We would accept the invitations, we would note where we had been invited to go. If it coincided with what our strategy was, we would sometimes accept. Occasionally we would change a schedule. I decided early on that he had to go and speak to the American Legion, so I bracketed that day and knew that we would have to go and speak to the American Legion. There were occasional events like that which would drive our schedule on select days. But,

basically, we determined where we wanted to go and we would create our own events, or ask to go to places where we thought something interesting was going on—some new economic strategy was being experimented with, some health program that was interesting to see, or something else. So we kind of designed our own schedule as opposed to responding to requests, which was a traditional conventional way that campaigns had been created. That worked extremely well. And there's lots of targeting. The political people and the polling people would target where we needed to be, and I allocated the time that way. The second thing is a lot of time in the primary had been wasted flying here and flying there without a lot of stops in between, so one advantage of the bus trip, and one thing I tried to do with my schedule, was to keep us in places for more extended periods of time—regions of the country. So we didn't waste so much time in the air and going back and forth. In fact today is like the worst day of the campaign because of flying. We flew last night from Detroit to Atlanta. We're flying today from Atlanta to Iowa and Milwaukee and then out to Cincinnati. So this is the first time that we are crisscrossing the country, to some extent. But one of the things we did—we had the good fortune that we could shrink the country for campaigning purposes because once we nailed down California, it meant that the need to go from east to west was reduced. Then if you take a map and look at the map, what we did was we came in from the primary and we knew we were strong in New York and we knew we were strong in California. So those were the two anchors for our campaign. We came into New York and we went to St. Louis,

through what was to become the heart of our victory. If we could go through the states that we passed through going to St. Louis, this was the heartland: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois. We passed through Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. Our second bus trip was to go up here: Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The big sum was Michigan. So that was the bus trips. What we did was we shrunk the country. The western governors asked us to do a fly around, and I had planned out this fly around. The question was when would we do it. Should we do it in August? Should we do it in September? Should we do it in October? And I originally had thought about doing it in September and I thought, "No, postpone it till October. Do it after the debates. Then we'll know where we stand. If it doesn't make sense and if it seems like a luxury, then we can either reduce it or not do it at all. Do just a meeting with the western governors." But after the debates we had the opportunity, and so we did this fly around from Colorado through Wyoming, where Governor Sullivan—who had been the first governor to support Bill—is from. Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada and California. We did this two-day fly around, but when we finished, even before that fly around—which was the only time we went back to California in October—what we did was we shrunk the country. And I can give you the charts I did about how much time I spent in every state. I mean, I have them all. The percentage of time and how I kept track of whether we were going there relative to how many electoral votes and how many human resources—

DB: Mark Steitz was showing me the maps—

ST: Yes. He did them different ways than I did them. But we coordinated them, so the country was shrunk. We did not need to go—any state that wasn't on the Mississippi—those states that were on the western edge of the Mississippi were as far west as we had to go at the end of the campaign. Now, on Monday, the day before Election Day, we're flying again out to Colorado and New Mexico, and we're doing Texas. But, in fact, we could end the campaign on the western borders of the states along the Mississippi. So look how small an area we have to travel.

DB: It's a lot more manageable.

ST: Not only that, but we have done so well in New England that I have sent Gore and Tipper back into New England, and this is a long flight. So, essentially, the campaign is sort of between New Jersey and Missouri. And that's a relatively small piece of the country. It doesn't take a long time to fly through it. You can zigzag—if you have to zigzag down here, while it's inconvenient, it's not horrible. If you have to zigzag between here and here and here, not only is it a whole day, but the time is against you, you lost lots—so this is how we did it. That was a luxury that was made possible by the strength of Bill Clinton in California, and the fact that we were able to lock down the west early on.

DB: Let me ask you a general question about the campaign organization. What makes this organization work? What are its strengths?

ST: Consensus decisions are being made. People have different roles, and they are

genuinely respectful of the turf of the other person in terms of their area of expertise, and they bring their expertise together with other people's expertise. When I was just doing Hillary's portion of the campaign, which is what I did from last October through June, it was very, very frustrating not just for me but for her because her campaign was not fully integrated with the overall campaign in terms of how she spent her time. And the second thing about it was I had observations about all parts of the campaign and had no vehicle in which to have input. By being the scheduler and controlling where the candidates and the other principals went, I had reason to be in on all these strategic decisions that I would not have been included on. And while they didn't always include me in on them, I learned about some of the things that they were doing and was able to force my input where it, in fact, was not requested. I think it's pretty good. To my way of thinking, there's two glaring weaknesses in this campaign.

DB: And they are?

ST: One is the media, which I think is just mediocre, to say the least—and not for lack of talent. Second of all, I don't think the campaign had a strategy. It was tactically a brilliant campaign, and the response part of the campaign is excellent. But it had no overall strategy. It had no closing message. And I think that it did not take advantage of all of Bill Clinton's strengths. So it did not elevate this campaign to the kind of heights I think it could have been taken to. The other thing that I find so peculiar is the person who has done electoral politics—James and George—believe that the message gets the people to the polls to vote. To the

extent that the people have already decided to vote, it gets them to the polls. But what it doesn't do is it doesn't motivate people to get to the polls enough. And it doesn't understand that part of the task of the campaign, and one way you use the schedule is to motivate the people who do the work to get the vote out. They don't understand that the field can control what the ultimate vote is, particularly since, I believe, in certain states that this election will be very close. So some of the activities that I would have done in the schedule, they wouldn't—you know, they would fight against because they said, "But that's not on message." They didn't appreciate that you need to do it to motivate people who say, "I now have a stake in this. I have seen Bill Clinton, and I now have a stake in making sure that he's elected president." That is what the visits in the last ten days of the campaign are supposed to be about. And by not permitting enough of that in the last week of the campaign, I think they have run a risk of having failed to mobilize the worker bees who actually get the vote out and who are responsible for closing the victory. And in some of these states, like Ohio and places like that, it's going to be very close. So when they forced me the other day to do a small message event in Toledo instead of doing a blow-out rally for 20,000 activists, I think that they dampened our campaign in the most important Democratic area of Ohio. And it'll be interesting to see what it does to the turnout. And I'm a numbers person, so I watch the numbers all these places, and it's going to be very interesting to compare. And I use as a model, in a place like Ohio, what Jimmy Carter was able to accomplish there in 1976. I'll be interested to see whether or not Bill Clinton can do as well. I was really disappointed that

this campaign made a strategic decision to go for the midwest and, I feel, ignored the south in a way that was not as wise. And we may win, but I think the strategy that we will win on is one of the most difficult of all. And I will give you two examples. So much of this campaign is dependent on our winning Ohio and Michigan, two states with Republican governors. Two states where the working class population is hostile to NAFTA which Bill Clinton supports. We ignored—and when I say ignored, we ignored in terms of resources—two states which had strong Democratic governors, Florida and Texas, and which had a population which generally agreed with Bill Clinton on most issues. So they say, "Well, Florida is not winnable. Texas is not winnable."

DB: Whose judgment prevails on that?

ST: Stan. Stan, who was the pollster, and James and George. David Wilhelm is the—who had the midwest strategy, because that's where his home is. He's from Ohio. And Stan Greenberg is an expert on Michigan, and that is a state that has made his career. So this is where this campaign was vested, but it did not need to have been that way. And Hillary and I have discussed that a lot. But the focus of this campaign could have been very different and it would have been a focus, I think, that Bill Clinton would have been more comfortable with because it would have been focusing on states where he had a personal affinity.

DB: You've used the word focus. Somebody, when I asked, "Where do you think is the real organizational core of this campaign?" said if you got right to the very top, you'd find a focus group.

ST: Don't talk to me about that subject.

DB: I thought that was an interesting observation.

ST: I think that it's ridiculous. To have the voters lead the campaign and to deprive the candidate of providing his own leadership, especially when you have a candidate as special as Bill Clinton, is crazy. What you want to do is heighten people's awareness and lead them someplace, not follow them. This campaign has been a campaign of following and not leading. And it personally is revolting to me and, I feel, very unnecessary. And I'd be sad if we win and the bottom result is that it reinforces this kind of policy.

DB: You think we're going to win, but you think we could have won as big, or better, if we were leading instead of following?

ST: Yes. It would have been a very different style campaign.

DB: Let me ask something else about the organization. Would you say it's centralized? Decentralized?

ST: Two things—well, I really like the fact that it's decentralized. I like the fact that there's not what we call in the management field, "command management." I think that is better. And I certainly think that, that's Bill Clinton's style. So I think that a command management style would not have suited Bill Clinton and therefore his campaign would probably have never been that way. So I don't mind that. And there is discipline. Everybody in the campaign is incredibly disciplined and focused. I think the reason that's true is because the campaign's in Little Rock and away from Washington, D.C. I think if the same group of people had been housed and living in Washington, D.C., the focus would have been completely destroyed by outside people putting pressure on the campaign

and constantly interacting on a daily basis with the campaign and whispering in their ear totally distracting ideas, and the conventional wisdom would have been driving the campaign. And I don't mean that conventional wisdom that you get from focus groups, but the usual rhetoric about "This is how it's always been done," and everything. So I think that being in Little Rock and having people so that they didn't have any life except for the campaign kept it very, very focused. Very, very focused and very, very disciplined. Although not in the command management point of view. It's not that kind of discipline.

DB: It seems in some ways to be a very democratic campaign. Kids go up to the "big shots" and offer ideas and taking responsibility.

ST: Yes. Everybody has to explain what they're doing and there has to be a general buying in. A little more leadership would have been useful at times, but I think, basically it's worked pretty well. This is the last week of the campaign. In the last week there's been some problems because, with the exception of myself and Mickey, no one's been in a presidential campaign to the end. It takes this kind of nerves of steel to get through it at the end, when you see things tightening and things changing. So there's been a little bit of acting out going on, which has been unhealthy. These people who are supposed to be the leaders of this campaign have not had nerves of steel, and they haven't had any prior experience to relate this to, so there are times that they've made poor decisions. I mean, I'll give you one yesterday which just made me crazy. There was a Reuters release about the fact that they had the Caspar Weinberger deal. Instead of letting the press take this story, which had been discovered by Reuters, the decision was

made to have Bill Clinton do a press conference on this, which instantly politicized it as opposed to making it a news story. Okay. They were so anxious to make sure that it got out there and they did not trust the reporters to do it. So instead of being a big story driven by the newspaper people themselves, it became a little bit of a Bill Clinton story which, in many voters' views, diminished the veracity of it. And I think diminished it. The second thing that happened is that George called in to the *Larry King Live* show, which I think was a strategic fumble. And I don't think it's an appropriate thing to do—again, politicizing it. But that's the kinds of things that happen at the end of the campaign to people that haven't been there before and are having trouble handling the pressure, and are trying to force things to get it resolved and settled and be sure of the win before in fact the process has worked itself fully out. And it's the first time—I think George Stephanopoulos is the most extraordinary talent in this campaign. I have enormous admiration for him, which just shows that under the pressure of wanting resolution and wanting to know how it's going to end, causes people to, perhaps, make minor missteps.

DB: Of the principals, Susan, that I think of as George and James and Stan and Mandy, Mickey and Eli—you have, in some ways, the closest relationship with the Clintons.

ST: I think Mickey has a close relationship.

DB: But does that facilitate your work? Does it make it more difficult for you to have other people feel comfortable with your decisions? How does that feed into it?

ST: It totally facilitates my work. In two ways. First of all, it gives me—for example,

no one in this campaign wanted to do a Florida bus trip, but because Bill and Hillary were for it and because Al Gore was for it, it was fine. Because I had the main four. They're the only ones who count. We did it, and I think if we had followed it up with some money and organizational talent, we actually could have done something in Florida. Florida, of course, now has fallen apart. But we invested nothing in Florida. We did no Clinton/Gore advertising in Florida, we only did generic Democrat advertising, which, of course, was not effective. So it's given me a lot of leverage and power. And but for my relationship with Hillary in particular, I think that the white boys would have not treated me and my ideas with the respect that the ideas deserved. Not me, personally, but the ideas deserved. And I think that that would have been unfortunate. Also, the people that you have just named, not one of them really has any political experience. It's all communication. I mean, George's experience, to the extent that he has it, with the exception of the Dukakis campaign, has been largely in the Congress of these United States. David Wilhelm, who in some ways has good political skills, had never been in a presidential campaign and doesn't understand the pressure of the decision making or putting the pieces together quite like it. So it's been interesting. David and I most often politically agreed on things, or at least have been able to come to a strategic agreement.

DB: His role changed from the primary to the general?

ST: Yes. Well, because his job was to secure the Democratic base. It was a very important job, and he did a terrific job at it. His contribution should not be diminished because without what he was doing, all the rest of this message stuff

would not have any base on which to attach itself. He helped us hold on to our base.

DB: One other scheduling question. Do you think that the way that you have used Hillary has been very atypical of past presidential campaigns?

ST: Yes.

DB: And can you elaborate on that at all?

ST: Hillary is our best—she's the most disciplined campaigner of all of them. Because she's the most disciplined of all of them. So if the message is determined, Hillary delivers the message in a very disciplined fashion. Second of all, she has amazing flexibility. She can do small events and make them profoundly emotional and compelling, and do big events, like rallies, and make them powerful and motivational. She has a lot of versatility. So she has the virtue of being disciplined and consistent, and also the flexibility or the diversity in her talents that makes her special. There was a time in which people in this campaign felt she shouldn't do big rallies, but I felt that it was really important for her because she turned on a whole voter base, particularly among the students, that really was not being turned on. She deserves a lot of credit for that and she really has been extraordinary. In addition to what she was able to do with women, she was also able to motivate younger voters. She's been a very important part of this.

DB: What has been your low point in all of this?

ST: I don't think I've had one. Before I came down to Little Rock on a more full-time basis, it was hard commuting. I would come here one or two days a week. I

would talk all night because I would work in my office and then go home at night and I'd be on the phone from 8:00 at night sometimes till 3:00 in the morning, working on that. And that was hard because I was always tired and I had no normal rhythm to my life, and I'd be on the road so that even when I was home, I was so tired I didn't really get to settle in and enjoy my family. But as soon as they came down here, even though I continued to travel some and leave Little Rock, it just was easier to have them here.

DB: Have you had a high point so far?

ST: I'll tell you three things, really. First of all, winning the New York primary was just fabulous. And it was particularly fabulous because it was the effort of people who I have known my entire political life, plus new people who I had never known. And we—Harold, myself, Sara Kovner, Victor Kovner, and Hulbert James, and all of us in New York—we had a concept, which we started as early as December when we began meeting. We began a series of meetings early in December through the middle of January, putting together what we thought was an important team in anticipation that Mario Cuomo, in fact, might get into the race. And Harold was extraordinary. I mean, I don't know that Bill and Hillary will ever fully appreciate the extent to which he expended his political capital in New York to build the team for him and use his credibility with these people who did not know Bill Clinton and did not know Hillary Clinton, and empowered them through his political credibility in the State of New York. He put together this organization, and he held it together all through the dark days of late January and February and early March. So we had sort of been—you know, we'd been

through it with them even though we, in fact, had been the entire time kind of working in and around the New York area. I went to New Hampshire with Hillary, but basically we were New York State. I had argued very strenuously and unsuccessfully for them not to do the Connecticut primary. I felt that they should just give it to Tsongas and just let him have it because I felt that you could only lose there, you could not win there. And when they insisted, because of Stan Greenberg, that they had to do Connecticut—and it happened as we thought—it had two disadvantages. One, we wanted Bill Clinton in New York. He couldn't be in New York because he had to be in Connecticut. So we lost actual time. The second thing about it, when he came into New York, he came into New York as a loser with the crazy Jerry Brown empowered and legitimized as a candidate. So you had this weird thing. And the third thing about it was I believed that Tsongas was not really out of the race—was hoping to still be in the race and was not going to withdraw from the race. What he was doing was he was reducing his exposure by saying that he was no longer a candidate, and yet all the people who had reservations about Brown or were not yet committed to Bill Clinton would vote for Tsongas. I kept on saying, "Look, guys, he's going to get 20 percent of the vote. He's just going to get the vote of all the people who want kind of a Tsongas candidate." So it was very hard. So when they came to New York, the team was full of their successes in the midwest—which were, in fact, wonderful successes—but not understanding really what it is you do to win the rough primaries, like New York. And it took us literally seventy-two hours of their making mistakes to get them to focus on how we were different and how it was

that you were going to have to win New York. Also, we had to share Bill Clinton with Wisconsin, and if we hadn't done Connecticut, we would have had plenty of time to do both. It's only really thanks to Tom Harkin and Tom Harkin's getting out of the race and endorsing Bill and campaigning vigorously for him—not so much in New York, but in Wisconsin—that we might have won only one of those two primaries. And Bill's ability to handle the rough-and-tumble of the New York media. That was the high point. The second thing was the convention, not so much the acceptance speech night. I went home that night. I wasn't actually at the convention that night because the day was very—it was a sad anniversary for me because one of my closest friends in the world had died five years ago on that day and it's always a hard day for me. But the day before when he actually won the nomination—I mean, I just choke up to think about it. It was incredible. When we actually got the vote. And the night he came into the hall, and Harry Thomason did that, and that was wonderful. That was also the night when I saw the Linda Bloodworth film, which I thought was extraordinary, even though it was shown the next night—but I actually got to see it and I thought it was wonderful. And the other high point for me was the feeling I had—it was on the bus trip. I was thrilled how well it was working, but I was here in Little Rock and they were talking about how Gore had not been sure when he first got on it that he wanted to stay on it the whole way. So I had arranged for an out in case he had not been happy because he was tentative about whether it was going to be successful. Of course, he decided he loved it and it was fine. But they were coming through—they had been in Indiana and they were going to Centralia,

where the attorney general of Illinois is from, and we knew that if we went into that town and even stopped for one minute, that he would get the entire town there and they would all jump in their cars and follow us to Vandalia. Well, we were doing that, and Anne Edwards, who was doing our press advance, had done this wonderful thing—understanding that we were already running late and that it was going to be dark when we got there, and we had billed it as an ice cream social, but we knew that instead of it being 6:00 at night, it was going to be 9:00 or 10:00 at night, so she handed out candles. So I was sitting here just imagining it—driving up this flat land from Centralia up to Vandalia. I had chosen Vandalia because that was the original capital of Illinois, and that was where Abraham Lincoln had gone when he was an assemblyman. And it's a lovely town, and I wasn't there that day, but I remembered this building and people who had been there recently had told me how poor it had become. It had been one of these perfect midwestern towns. As they were driving along, the people were calling in from the road and saying to me wherever they went the road was lined with people and that there was this one lady who had a shop on the road that had blocked the road to force them to stop, and they were going and going. I was following them, and the secret service kept yelling at me, like, "We're late! We're late, we're never going to get into St. Louis on time! We're late, we're late!" It was getting dark, and we hadn't done the appropriate lighting, which we subsequently did when things happened at night. We didn't have lots of lights set up and all the things when you do a late night event. Then this local police guy who I had talked to about it called me to say to me that the line of cars was three

miles long—there was three-miles worth of cars following this bus brigade. And you could just imagine in my mind, going through the dusk and then into the dark. Then they got to Vandalia. Bill gave his speech and it started to get dark and they all lit these candles and they stood there in the dark with the candles, and I could imagine that. I could just imagine it and I just thought, "This is incredible." And I wasn't even there.

DB: I've got two more questions. When in your mind did you know he was going to be the nominee?

ST: Oh, I always knew that. From the day he announced. Because he has the clearest sense of why he was doing this than anybody else. And I really have a lot of faith in the voters and that eventually they would understand. And he's smarter and he's quicker and a better politician. But he's also just a better person. He and Hillary—the life of service has been their life. And I just knew that the American people were smarter than the press and everybody else and that he would win. I just knew. I never for a minute doubted that they would win.

DB: Both the nomination and the presidency?

ST: Yes. And even before—I mean, October of 1991—I mean, the economy was in such bad shape and Bush didn't get it and never realized it. And I knew that. He was expecting something to save him. But in the world that I live in, there are real economic challenges that America faces that there have been no plans to meet. And I'm not saying that it's only George Bush's fault. All of us are responsible. Every state government, every local government. Everyone bears responsibility, but there was no leadership. There was no planning and there was

no sense of how do we prepare for the future. Everyone was expecting, "Well, if we just do what we're doing, things are going to get better all by themselves." It was clear over the last seven years that that wasn't going to happen, and Bush was relying on that—that we would bounce back and that circumstances would rescue him. And I thought to myself, "This is ridiculous." I mean, I was sure that Dukakis could not win in 1988 because I thought that the Republicans had done nothing apparent that is so horrible to cause the midstream voter to change and vote for the Democrats. But now I was convinced that he was beatable, so if we lose now, I will be despondent because it will not only affect how I feel about the Clintons, but how I feel about the voters.

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

ST: I don't know. It's interesting. I think there are not enough people in the campaign who realize that the hard work begins the day he gets elected. And I think that people do not realize that the campaign, as hard as it's been, this has been the fun. This has been the strategic battle. The hard work—which will also be gratifying but it's going to be really hard work—begins when he gets elected. And I don't think that people really realize how much work it's going to require and how much—I don't mean this as a downer—what an opportunity it offers. But, nonetheless, I don't know whether they appreciate the demands that these times are going to make on us because we neglected the basic things of this country, and no one has a really strong strategy for how to recapture all the things that were lost over the last fifteen years. It's not just the Republicans. You know, I think that we Democrats did not do a very good job with what we had in 1976.

While I think Jimmy Carter's a wonderful person and had some very good ideas, he did not have the skills of leadership, nor did he bring in the types of people that were able to do the kinds of groundwork that needed to get done. And he didn't build the partnerships and alliances to prevail. I mean, I think with the benefit of hindsight that the 1980 election was very winnable, but Jimmy Carter had the wrong people with him to help him win it. I think if he had won in 1980, the world would have been a very different place.

[End of Interview]

[Reviewed and edited by Pryor Center staff]