

ROBERT J. DOLE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
WILLIAM B. LACY
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Interviewer
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Williams: This is an oral history interview with Bill Lacy for the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas. We're in the Institute's offices. Today is Wednesday, June 18, 2008. I'm Brien Williams.

Bill, let's start out with what led you to become involved in politics.

Lacy: I got in politics, Brien, at a pretty early age. My first memory of politics and public events was the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1961. Was it 1961, by the way?

Williams: I'm pretty sure. [1962—BW]

Lacy: Okay. Sorry about that. My dad was in the state legislature in Tennessee, and I got to go see President [Lyndon B.] Johnson speak in about 1968 or 1969. I remember my dad was—no longer is—a Democrat. In 1964 I asked if I could go downtown to get to the Republican Party Headquarters in Cookeville, Tennessee, where I'm from, to get a [Barry] Goldwater sticker, and he made Mom take me down there because he was a Democrat, had Democratic aspirations, and didn't want to be seen going into the Republican Headquarters for a Goldwater sticker. Then he was in the legislature. I got to see President Johnson.

It was kind of a natural progression after that. I started writing columns for the school newspaper, debating, read William F. Buckley, followed that, and then wound up being very deeply involved in politics in the conservative movement in college, and then went to [Washington] D.C. So I had about a twenty-year career there in D.C., doing mostly political strategy, political campaign management, working for people like Ronald Reagan, President [George H.W.] Bush 41, Fred Thompson, and, of course, Senator Dole.

Williams: Coming out of a Democratic background, what did you account for your early right-wing swing?

Lacy: My mom was mostly Republican, and her family were mostly Republicans, but Dad was always very conservative. Of course, the South at that time was extremely Democratic, but they were all very conservative. So I just consider myself sort of ahead

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of the curve on the South swing towards the Republican Party, which was solidified back really starting in the '64 presidential campaign and continuing on into the future.

Williams: Is that, '64, what brought you to Washington or not? No.

Lacy: In '64 I was ten, so I would like to argue that was the case, but no. The very first thing that brought me to Washington was in 1977. I had had a lot of friends who were in Washington and wanted to go up there and work because I wanted to be involved in campaigns or something, so I just decided I was going to move to D.C.. After school, I went up there, got a job right off the bat, and wound up, after doing two years with an excellent mentor named Bruce Eberle, who was a direct-mail fundraiser mostly and development guy, wound up working in Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign.

Williams: '77, that was right after Watergate, and the Republican Party was still trying to reestablish itself, I guess.

Lacy: Oh yes.

Williams: Talk a little about that. What was it like?

Lacy: I thought it was a wonderful time for us, because most conservatives thought that President [Richard M.] Nixon had not done a particularly good job for the Party or the country. I distinctly remember that at one point the *National Review* magazine, which was headed by Bill Buckley, just publicly withdrew their support from the president, and not that that really affected him in any way, but to me it was a fairly dramatic way to say we don't accept the way he is governing.

So from our point of view, the seventies were actually very exciting because Ronald Reagan had run for president and almost had won a miracle comeback against President [Gerald R.] Ford in '76. Ford had lost. Jimmy Carter was elected. Jimmy Carter was already struggling by 1977. It was a good time because you could see that things in our country were really beginning to noticeably change, that the conservative movement, that the Goldwater-Reagan piece of the Party was really starting to coalesce

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and starting to gain strength and momentum. Obviously that's what happened with the '80 presidential campaign.

Williams: So you went to work for the RNC at some point?

Lacy: I worked for the RNC actually in 1984 and '85, and I was asked to go over there by Ed Rollins and Lee Atwater, who would be the management team for the president's reelection campaign, to go over there just to make sure that the RNC's political operation was working closely with the president's reelection campaign.

Williams: So my notes are in error. I thought you had been at the RNC in '75-'82 period, but not so.

Lacy: In '75, I was still in school.

Williams: I don't know where I got that, but anyway, I apologize.

What about your awareness of Bob Dole at this point, and where did you put him on this political spectrum you're describing?

Lacy: Obviously I was aware of Bob Dole. I think any Republican is aware of Bob Dole at a very, very early age. I can't really tell you, Brien, the time that I would become aware of him, but I was very aware in college and would have known essentially who he was, because he was the chairman of the RNC, he was very deeply involved in the early stages of Watergate, defending the president. So I was aware of him, but I didn't get to meet him until sometime in the early eighties. I had a couple jobs in the early eighties. I was deputy director in the campaign shop at the National Republican Congressional Committee and went over to work for Ed Rollins and Lee Atwater in the White House Political Office as Lee's deputy in 1982. It was sometime around that time that I first actually met Bob Dole that I can recall. I was representing the White House at a big Republican Party Midwestern regional event at Mackinac Island in Michigan, and Senator Dole was there and I met him. That was really the first time I remember physically meeting him.

The first time I really got to know Bob Dole was in 1986, and I was sorting out what I was going to do. I was the political director for President Reagan at that point. We were, of course, in our last term, and I was sorting out what I was going to do in the '88 campaign. My inclination at the time was to probably work for then Vice President [George H.W.] Bush, because Lee Atwater was running his campaign, and I was very close to Lee. But as much as I really liked and respected the vice president, I didn't believe him to be a genuine conservative like Reagan, and so there were some nagging doubts. I was very interested in Bob Dole. The reason I was always interested in Bob Dole was because I have always thought him to be a superior leader. Now, there are those who would argue that Bob Dole is not a traditional genuine conservative, and they're probably right, but like President Bush, he comes down on most sides of the issues from the more conservative point of view.

So the way that I actually got to know him and start working for him is through an individual named Don Devine, a very conservative movement guy, who was originally a professor of political science at the University of Maryland. I had worked with Don on the '80 Maryland Reagan primary campaign very, very closely. He was the campaign chairman; I was the campaign director. I have a lot of respect for Don, and we got along very well. He was actually running Dole's Political Action Committee, which was being used to move Dole around the country, help Republican candidates win races.

But at the same time, we were kind of looking towards the possibility of Dole seeking the presidency again as he had in 1980. The bottom line was that Don knew me, thought that I would be a good person to be his deputy over there. He had been head of OPM [Office of Personnel Management] during the first few Reagan years. I had always admired Bob Dole a lot and knew him as a war hero, but I didn't really know him personally and didn't even know what he was like and really didn't know if I'd feel comfortable supporting him because he wasn't a movement traditional Reagan-Goldwater conservative.

So Don asked me if I was interested in the job, I told him I was, and he wanted me to do it, but I had to be interviewed by Dole. So I did a list of—this is funny, because I'll have to give you a little context after I describe the story. I go to the senator's office. The meeting was in the Majority Leader's office. He had this huge office set up in there, and he would rarely—at least when I was in his presence, I almost never saw him sit at

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the desk. He would always sit with his guests kind of in a sitting area. He went over there and made small talk at first and then asked me some questions and then said, “I’m sure you’ve got questions for me.”

I said, “Yes, Senator, actually I do,” and I showed him my leather portfolio with my legal pad in it. I said, “I’ve got about thirty.” I said, “Is that okay?”

He said, “Go for it.”

So we sat there and we did that. He said, “By the way, that reminds me of Elizabeth [Dole]. She’s really well organized, too.” And he sat there and talked with me and answered questions. I asked him questions on a bunch of philosophical issues. I never judged anybody on one issue, so there was no one answer that would get him ruled out. But I wanted to see how he would respond to me on some things that were really important to me. So I asked him about abortion, but that wasn’t going to be make or break, and I asked him about his views on being president, on running a campaign, and then on specific policy things. We wound up sitting there an hour and a half, and I thought, “This is kind of neat.” I got to ask him every question I wanted, and he and I seemed to hit it off pretty well.

Now, I didn’t know at the time, but I was in his office a lot over the next several years, both in conjunction with the ’88 campaign, his ’92 reelection campaign, and the ’96 presidential campaign. When I sat there with him for almost an hour and a half, I had no clue how he operated. I learned over the next ten years that the way he would operate was he would rarely be in a meeting with anybody, even his colleagues, for more than ten or fifteen minutes, and he had the amazing and uncanny ability to run four or five meetings at a time, and he’d have the right staff person in there to ensure continuity. He would wander from place to place to place. Elizabeth Dole once told me—and she’s so right—he’s got like a laser-beam focus. I mean, he really can get down to the crux of any kind of an issue immediately. And after I saw all this that would go on in his office every day, day after day from the moment he arrived until the moment he left, it really amazed me that he sat there for an hour and a half and he answered all those questions.

Williams: How do you account for that?

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Lacy: I think he was very extraordinarily serious about the '88 campaign, and I think that he felt that I was young, that I would be a critical part of that. I wouldn't have thought these things necessarily at the time, but I think looking back in retrospect. And I also think even though he knew Don knew me, I had a reputation around town as I wasn't going to pick sides in conflicts, I was there to do my job and I didn't have a personal agenda or anything. I think that over time, he definitely learned that that was kind of my style. But maybe he sensed that in me at the time, I don't know.

Williams: I'm confused. Were you interviewing him, or was he interviewing you?

Lacy: It was both ways. It was clearly both ways. Again, like I say, I didn't know the man, and I didn't want to be presumptuous, and I wasn't, because I'm a very respectful person, but I was kind of like preparing to commit a couple years of my life and a lot of hours and effort to him, and I felt it was my prerogative to ask those questions. As I said, at the time I didn't think I was being treated any differently than he would any other meeting, but later on, I found out an hour and a half with him uninterrupted was rather amazing.

Williams: We had a lot of confirmation of that in this oral history collection.

Lacy: Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure.

Williams: What was the outcome then of that meeting?

Lacy: The outcome was, "Go back, talk to Don and we'll see what we can do," and I wound up working for him.

Williams: Before we get into the '88 campaign, you mentioned Lee Atwater. Tell me what it was like to be working with him as his deputy and so forth.

Lacy: Lee Atwater was a fascinating guy, very fascinating. He's really not what his reputation was. He's really not. I mean, he played hardball, but that wasn't his only

approach to things. He could usually outsmart most people, and people he couldn't outsmart, he would simply outwork. He'd work incredible hours.

He was a wonderful mentor for me because he taught me a lot about dealing with difficult situations, because I'd never had to go through many difficult situations. I remember one time I was all distraught and went to his office to get advice because some state party chairman or something had called me up and said, "You know, we sent you this invitation to the president for our event, and we need to know right away if the president's going to be able to come, so you're going to have to get me an answer." The guy was laying the pressure on pretty good.

Lee, in his own way, kind of explained to me how power works, and he says, "You've got to understand you're in the catbird seat on this."

I said, "Well, what do you mean?"

He says, "He thinks he's higher up the food chain," and these are my words, not Lee's. "He's higher up the food chain than you are, but you're actually a lot higher up the food chain than he is." Then he says, "Let me tell you what to tell him, and I promise you it'll work."

I said, "You promise me?"

He said, "Yes, I promise you it will work. You go back right now to his office, you call him and you tell him, 'John,' or whoever his name was, 'if you have to have an answer today, I can give it to you.'" And then he told me what to do.

So I called up the guy and said, "John, how are you? If you have to have an answer today, I've got the answer for you."

He said, "Oh, great. What is it?"

"The president will not be attending your event."

He says, "What do you mean, the president will not be attending?"

"You said you had to have an answer today. If that's the requirement, there's your answer. So I met your need."

He said, "Well, I don't really have to have an answer today. Can we keep the invitation?"

So you get the idea there. And he taught me so many things like that, that I had never dealt with. I had gone from the Congressional Campaign Committee, where we were taught to think of congressmen as kind of little gods, because they were our

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constituency and that's the way we should look at them, to the White House, where in one fell swoop they went from being gods to being guys that did favors for you because you worked for the President of the United States, and that was quite an adjustment, especially for a really young guy.

Williams: From the perspective of the White House while you were there, did you pick up any sense of what Dole meant to the White House or what relationships were like and so forth?

Lacy: Yes, but, you know, not a whole lot, in all honesty, because we were in the political office. The political office at the Reagan White House, it was the first time the White House had a, quote, "political office." Although everything that we did had been done by people before, they never created a special office to do it. So we were involved mainly in scheduling the president, picking campaigns that he would visit, fundraisers for campaigns and state parties, supporting the national committees and their role and all of that. Obviously, though, you could see that Senator Dole and the president were working together sometimes, were not working together other times.

Our mission in the political office was to help all Republicans, and the Reagan White House was extraordinarily good about this. They really took a very different view than I have read that the Nixon White House took. Their view, generally speaking, was unless someone did something egregious, that they were Republican, this is a big-tent party, there's room for this guy and we're going to help him out. So we really helped a lot of the moderate and liberal Republicans out just as much as we helped the conservatives out. So there wasn't a whole lot of that. There was a little bit of that, but not a whole lot of that, so I didn't really have the responsibility of lobbying members, although I was pulled in by the legislative shop every now and then to help with somebody I knew particularly well.

But I also got to connect with Dole. We were talking about when I met Dole and everything, and as I tell you this stuff, I kind of remember more. I wanted to build a better relationship with Bob Dole, and so somebody told me about this woman who was his right hand, and her name was Jo-Anne [L.] Coe. She was supposed to be very political. So I remember one day, and I believe this was probably in about—I think it

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would have been like '83, that I had Jo-Anne over for lunch in the White House mess, and that was the first time I got to know Jo-Anne. She and I had from that point forward just—she was a remarkable lady. We had a relationship where we could call each other and talk to each other about stuff, basically until 1997, and I lost touch with her after that and then she passed away five years later. But she was a very interesting character, too.

Williams: Do you want to give me five adjectives to describe Jo-Anne Coe?

Lacy: I admired Jo-Anne Coe so much because she was a woman who made it in a man's world, and she made it the old-fashioned way. So the adjectives would be tough, fair, loyal to a fault to Bob Dole, loyal to a fault to her friends, and the fifth one would be relentless, unstoppable. I mean, she was like a freight train. When Bob Dole had her assigned to do something, it was going to happen, no matter how many bodies had to be buried or what. If you convinced her that something was good for Bob Dole, it would happen. There is one other thing I should point out. She never had a personal agenda that I ever saw in all the years that I knew her, never once. She was an interesting lady.

Williams: In dealing with her, did you have to feel like you needed to have your shield in place as you went before her, or not?

Lacy: I never felt that way. I think in life there are people that you meet and you just really like, and you understand they have flaws, maybe, but you don't really care. You just like them, and they do things for you and you do things for them. Then there are people that you don't ever really feel comfortable around, and she seemed very—I mean this is a positive way, she seemed a very simple person, and I consider myself a simple person. I knew what her agenda was all the time. It was always Bob Dole, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, every year. That was her agenda. I mean, I don't know what I could tell you about her other than that. The only thing I know is she was very close to her parents, and they were quite elderly, and she was close to her daughter. Gosh, I don't know that I could tell you anything else about her personal life. I think 90 percent of her life was Bob Dole. So, no, I never felt any reluctance to go to her about all

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kinds of stuff. In fact, she was usually the best sounding board when I had to deal with the senator on a difficult topic.

Williams: Were there other similar characters on the Senate side, or was she somewhat unique?

Lacy: No, she was unique in that respect. I would describe her as being the person who was Dole's kind of political financial extension. Obviously, the senator—and you've heard a lot about this from other people who are far more knowledgeable on this stuff than I am. But people like Bob [Robert] Lighthizer, Rod [Roderick] DeArment, Senator Dole's longstanding chief of staff, Sheila Burke, those folks were extraordinarily important in the overall scheme of things. But, again, I'm looking at everything kind of from a more limited perspective, from his campaigns, his fundraising, those kinds of things, and so Jo-Anne was always kind of the first—was basically the direct link to Dole on everything like that. I never felt obligated to go through anybody else on political-type stuff, although we'd try to include Sheila and whoever was appropriate in a lot of that.

Williams: One other, from the perspective of the White House, question. When Dole was elected as Majority Leader in '84, I guess, to take over in '85, did the White House have among those candidates a favored candidate?

Lacy: I wouldn't have known about that. As a matter of fact, I don't even believe I would have been at the White House then. I would have still been at the RNC. I came back to the White House when--that would have actually been after the election in '84, and I was at the RNC until early '85. My guess is they probably did, and to be honest, it probably wasn't Bob Dole, which I would have said to them, "It's all the more reason you should support him, because the guy is independent and is going to do what he thinks is right."

Williams: Let's talk about the '88 campaign then.

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Lacy: Sure.

Williams: What was your role?

Lacy: I was the campaign director. The way it was conceived is that Bob [Robert] Ellsworth would be the chairman of the campaign, would provide the kind of oversight and gray eminence, and I would be kind of the day-to-day chief operating officer. It was something I had always wanted to do, and even though I was really well trained for it, I pretty quickly found out I was probably in over my head because we had so much to do and so little time to do it and all.

Bob was great to work with, Bob Ellsworth, but he and I were just beginning our relationship, too, and, you know, it takes a while to sort through things like that. In many cases, I found in my experience campaigns are often decided by how quickly chemistry is created within a campaign. Lots of them don't create chemistry. Ours clearly did after a while, but it took a while to do it, so it was a tough campaign.

Then, to make a long story short, and I'll answer any specific questions that you have, but there was a feeling, I think, that the senator had, which I probably would have agreed with him at the time, and probably would say, in retrospect, I was wrong on, that they needed a heavier person to come in and take charge, and ultimately they recruited Bill [William E.] Brock to do that. Then he came in. There are much better accounts than this interview of this, but he basically came in and ripped apart the campaign and rearranged everybody's role.

At that point, I became a vice chairman of the campaign for strategy, planning, and research, and it took me out of the day-to-day and gave me the chance to do one of the things I'm really especially good at, which is planning and reading polls and those kinds of things. But overall, in retrospect, Senator Dole and the campaign would have better served, I think, if the original team would have been in place.

Williams: How big a team was that originally? You mentioned the two of you.

Lacy: Oh, gosh, we probably had forty or fifty people on staff at one point. Kim Wells was deeply involved. Mari [Maseng] Will, then Mari Maseng, was our communications

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director. It was a pretty filled-out team, and we were going up against the Bush steamroller that Lee had put together, and it was uphill from the very beginning.

Williams: Did you and Lee have phone conversations or chats during this period?

Lacy: We actually, before I took the job—and I'm jumbling the chronology on you, Brien, but after the meeting with Bob Dole when Don Devine offered me the job over at Dole's PAC, Campaign America, I called up Lee and I said, "I need to meet with you." I don't think I called him up; I think I actually went over and met with him. So I went to the Bush PAC and met with him, and I told him what I was thinking about doing and, in essence, asked for his blessing. I think he was stunned, because he perceived me as being somebody who was very close to him, which I consider myself very close to him. I think there was a perception that I would be going to the Bush campaign at some time. He asked me a bunch of questions, and at the end he said, "Well, Lacy, I've seen you do some pretty stupid things since I've known you, but this is the stupidest. But if you want to go do this, you have my blessing and my full support." So I did it.

Williams: What was your strategy during that first period in the '88? What was your focus, you and Ellsworth?

Lacy: First, we had to get just the infrastructure of the campaign put together, which is a huge undertaking. Bob was a very wise person, but was kind of out of touch with how things were done at that point in time, and I knew that, but I was young and probably had not learned to delegate and gather strong people around me as well at that point. So I think the first piece of it was getting an infrastructure going. The second was just trying to create a sense of momentum. But we raised quite a bit of money, and the money creates a sense of momentum in a campaign. So our basic strategy from the very beginning, Don Devine had a strategic concept which we modified, but he had this Lesser Antilles strategy, the idea being there were a lot of these little tiny contests going on early in the process, that if you cherry-picked those and won a few of them, you could get enough momentum to build your credibility. But it became very clear that a simple strategy was required, what is kind of the classic breakthrough strategy against a

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formidable front runner; that is, you have to score early and then you've got to turn up the heat someplace really, really high and see if you can pull it off. So we always knew that Iowa would be very strong, and we hired a guy named Tom Synhorst, who is a Chuck [Charles] Grassley guy, who is probably without a doubt the best political organizer I've ever worked with in my life. Tom went in and organized Iowa in an amazing fashion, and we wound up winning there, and that propelled us on to New Hampshire.

Unfortunately, at this point the Brock folks had taken over the campaign and had basically spent the campaign into bankruptcy and had created all kinds of ill will with all of Dole's supporters everywhere. We got narrowly defeated in New Hampshire, as I remember correctly. It was a combination of things. It was a combination of an attack tax ad by the Bush campaign that got on at the very end, a combination of snowstorm that crippled our campaign, and it was a situation where Bush made a remarkable comeback in a very short period of time. Basically, we didn't know it then, but it was over then. We got swept, I think, on Super Tuesday and it was all pretty much over by that point.

Williams: A lot of people talk about failure to get a response ad on the air in New Hampshire to the "Senator Straddle" campaign. What's your take on that?

Lacy: My take on that is those are probably people that don't know how that's done. If you go back and you look at history, it's actually recorded in writing in several places that that ad, I believe, only got on the air on the Manchester station in New Hampshire. It didn't make the air in Boston. And the only way they got the ad on the air was John Sununu, who was deeply involved in the Bush campaign and was governor, basically called up the program director or the advertising director or whomever, at the station there and said, "You're going to have to put this ad on for me," and just insisted that it go on the air. This was after the books were closed, so, theoretically, it was not even possible for the Bush campaign to get the attack ad on the air. So anybody says the failure to get a response ad up, I think probably doesn't know really the history of that, unless my memory is incorrect on that.

Williams: Was there an effort made?

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Lacy: There were actually a couple of attack ads made to Bush, and I know the “footprints in the snow” ad was one of them, and I’m struggling to remember if that one actually aired or not. But there were a number of ads like that that were thought through, and everybody knew that stuff would come. But, again, and to be honest with you, I didn’t like what Bill Brock and his folks did. I thought they really tore the campaign up, but I honestly don’t think there was anything they necessarily could have done. I’d have to go back and look at notes and maybe read some of the stuff that was done, to get my chronology straight, and I probably should have done that before today.

Williams: How do you account for Brock and company’s miscalculations or the direction in which they took the campaign?

Lacy: I think they were from a previous generation. Bill Brock had been extraordinarily successful as a U.S. senator, had run the Republican National Committee. I had a lot of respect for him. But they had a different point of view about things. I remember one of the very first times I started wondering about it was when we were doing a regional workshop and one of our press secretaries had encouraged our local organizations to build relationships with the media. There was the old Nixon style of dealing with the media, which is you stay away from them and you never talk to them. But during the Reagan years, the conservatives developed a very different perspective of the media. It was kind of like you’ve got to learn how to work with them or you’ll never get your message out. So that doesn’t mean you aren’t guarded and that you don’t closely make sure you put everything in its appropriate context, but it means you don’t avoid them either.

He pulls me aside after this woman says this and says, “Wow, your staff is telling the volunteer, the county and state chairs, to deal with the press?”

I said, “Sure, Senator. I mean, that’s the way we did it in the Reagan White House and we did at the RNC and everything.”

He said, “I don’t like that idea.” So you begin to see things.

I think that they decided that—and I don’t know why. You’d have to talk—well, you did talk to Bill Brock. I’ll eagerly await his interview. I don’t know. I don’t know if it was a matter of perhaps not having the faith that their orders would be executed. I

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don't know if it was the fact that there was kind of a friction that developed pretty quickly because of the way they came into the campaign and asked a bunch of goofy questions and, in essence, conducted an inquisition into how it was being run. It just got off on a bad foot and it deteriorated from there. It got so bad that the story that Kim Wells undoubtedly said in his interview—did you do the interview with Kim? Was the old “Live long and prosper.” You know, we'd go down the hall and when the Brock people weren't looking and we saw one of our allies, we'd say, “Live long and prosper, avoid the Klingons,” and that was the running joke that ran for many years. I still hear that from Kim from time to time.

Williams: You're describing a difference in tactics or approach to politics. What I've also heard and read a lot about was just a misuse of funds.

Lacy: Oh yes. I've said they bankrupted the campaign. Again, they just paid astronomical sums. We had done everything.... We'd spent a lot of money, but we had saved a lot of money, too, on that campaign. I've always been rather cheap when it comes to campaigns, in terms of staffing and in terms of upfront costs, because I always believed that the bulk of a campaign budget should go into voter contact. It's very different at the presidential level because not as much of that can go into voter contact, but you still want to save a lot of that money. They came in and, again, they took what I called—again, a lot of them were from a previous political generation, and Bill Brock was a terrific organizer and I had enormous respect for him, and I still do, for that matter, as a senator and as a groundbreaking chairman for our party. But at the same time, they were from a more organizational kind of discipline, and I think the world had changed. It was certainly not where we are today in the Information Age with 24/7 coverage of politics and the blogs and on the cable TVs, but it was very different from what it had been when they were running campaigns. A lot of those guys hadn't been in campaigns in ten, fifteen years, and I think they were really out of touch.

Williams: It's interesting, though, and it's kind of hard to believe, because you always assume that Republicans know how to take good care of the pocketbook.

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Lacy: Yes, well, it's not the case in that situation. Now, their argument was not irrational; they just said, "You guys haven't done all these things. Why haven't you done them?"

We said, "We made conscious decisions not to spend the money to do that because we believe the money should be used to do other things like TV advertising, direct mail, stuff like that down the way."

They took enormous exception to that. So when you say there are tactics and there's money, nah, they're intertwined. The tactics drive the use of the money. They wanted to do things tactically different, therefore they wanted to deploy the money earlier, use it in different ways. Most of the people who had been there before vehemently disagreed with that approach.

Williams: Looking at that whole group, the newcomers to the campaign, do you think they ever felt culpability?

Lacy: No, I think they were so confident in their own judgment that they felt it was basically too far gone by the time they got in, and having just gone through a campaign where I would, in essence, say it was too far gone by the time I got into it with Fred Thompson's campaign, it was just too late. It wasn't that it was too far gone; it was too late. I think they would say, "Things had not been done and we had no choice but to make them happen." I think that's a legitimate difference in point of view.

I think in retrospect, if you look at contemporary history in the Republic Party, a strong front runner has not been dislodged since Dwight [D.] Eisenhower was nominated over [Robert A.] Taft, and that's totally a horse of a different color. So I think that as you go back, I think it's a miracle that we were able to win Iowa and get right to the verge of victory in New Hampshire, and I think basically after that the window closed and it was all over. I think Bush was the presumptive nominee from the beginning. It would have been very difficult to have defeated him. Just like in '96 it was impossible to beat Dole for the nomination.

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Williams: Talking about this campaign and its operation and whatnot, of course, the person we haven't talked about yet is Bob Dole himself. Where was he while all this perturbation was going on?

Lacy: **Error! Bookmark not defined.**In that campaign, Senator Dole was, of course, functioning as Republican Leader, and really one of the challenges—and I respect him for this, but I also say it makes it very difficult, essentially he was doing two full-time-plus jobs at a time. He was being the Republican Leader in the Senate and he was fulfilling all of his responsibilities there, and he was being a candidate for president. What that did is it basically meant that—the way I would say it is I think he probably did his Senate job extraordinarily well, but we didn't have very much time for him to do his presidential job, and that was always a challenge. It's hard for anybody to focus on doing two things like that.

You look at people who are running now. John McCain, Senator McCain, Senator Obama, Senator [Hillary Rodham] Clinton ran for a year and a half each, and I'm sure they made most votes and everything, but the Senate's very different now. They're in session about three days a week, usually, and when Dole was the Leader, they were in session for four and five days, as I remember it, almost every week. Just made it very difficult. Made it very difficult. He didn't like to practice speeches. Very difficult.

One of the problems that Bob Dole had in both '88 and '96 is Senator Dole came up at a time of retail politics. If you go out here and you listen to one of these displays—and this never dawned on me. I knew something like this, but until I heard his words, I never really fully understood this and really felt comfortable in this judgment. There's this one display out here where he talks about how when he first ran for Congress in 1960 he drove all over the district and went to every farmhouse he could, and when he was out around at night, if there was a light on, he took that as an invitation to go in and speak to the people. And if you ever see Bob Dole interact with individuals, it is totally different from the way that Bob Dole interacts with the TV camera. It's just totally different. In retrospect, I think he is a politician of a retail age who just never quite got into the TV age per se, really until after he was a candidate in '96, because very clearly once he was free to be himself, when he appeared with [Jay] Leno, when he appeared with [David] Letterman and when he went to the White House to accept the award from President

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[William J.] Clinton, he was himself. He was funny, he was engaging and all that, and I think that was always a challenge in both '88 and '96.

Williams: After the letdown in New Hampshire, where did Bill Lacy head?

Lacy: I actually headed down South and worked with Pat Brock, who is Bill Brock's brother, down there, and a guy that I'd helped Pat get into the campaign. And Bill Dalton had been a regional director for me at the Republican National Committee when I was political director. And I was down there for a few weeks.

Then after Illinois, I was summoned back to D.C. and told that most everybody except a very small number were going off the payroll. I said, "Are you telling me to leave or that I can stick around and do my job and just won't be paid?"

They said, "We'd love for you to do the latter," and I stuck it out to the end, which was very shortly thereafter, shortly after Super Tuesday. It was Illinois. I don't remember, again, the chronology that well.

Williams: So then where did you go?

Lacy: This would have been 1988. I decided it was time to start my own firm. So I went into business for myself and went out and started looking for clients and opened up a small office.

To go back to Lee Atwater, the day after Bob Dole withdrew, Lee Atwater called me personally and said, "Well, sorry about your guy, but that was the way it was always going to be." George [W. Bush], our current president, who actually had an office next to Lee and was working with Lee on his dad's campaign in 1988, "George and I would like for you to come down and meet with us, because we'd like you to take a big role in the vice president's campaign." So I wound up running California, so I had to kind of suspend my business, almost, and did most of my work then for the Bush campaign and for the RNC for the rest of that year and then really kind of got back into it in 1990.

Williams: So what was it like working with George W.?

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Lacy: That campaign, obviously, was much better organized than the Dole campaign, and it was really good because in California they had a team that—California is a different world in politics, and those of us who are kind of East Coast people usually don't grasp and understand. And the Californians intuitively know that, and they resent us. So Lee's mission was to figure out how to put his person in that he could count on who could get along with the Californians. So one of the things I said that I was known for in my time was not having a personal agenda on things, so I was the person that Lee called upon to try to fit that need. So I went out there and dealt with Governor [George] Deukmejian and all of his folks who were responsible for the campaign out there.

To make a long story very, very short, we all got along wonderfully, and that's largely because the way I approach things. I don't usually have answers. My job isn't to come in with answers; my job is to come in and find answers. So you find answers by asking lots of questions, not spouting a lot of opinions. So we just went in and found a lot of information, did the research, did a real quick survey of the state, put together a campaign strategy that everybody liked, had it signed off on out there, sent it to Bob [Robert M.] Teeter. He was the director of strategy for the campaign. Teeter loved it, absolutely loved it. So did Rich Bond, the political director. So did Lee. And from there on, it was basically a matter of execute.

The vice president we saw on a pretty frequent basis. He came out multiple times. It was always wild, because that's the only time I ever saw like motorcades stop traffic in California. That's a totally different scene than seeing a presidential or vice president motorcade stop traffic anywhere else in the world. Like eight or ten lanes of traffic that just shut down. It was a fascinating, eye-opening experience.

Williams: Bush won in California.

Lacy: Yes, he did. It was actually the last time a Republican presidential candidate carried California.

Williams: What was crucial to the plan that you came up with? What were some of the main strategic—

Lacy: We called it the four states of California strategy. In essence, I'd gotten with some political and demographic experts and they sold me on the notion that if you look at California as a piece, you'll get yourself in big trouble, because it's really a country. It's its own country, and they totally sold me on that notion. I actually thought it was brilliant. But equally to that, I thought this is such an easy concept to sell. This is just an easy angle to sell to people. When I say "people," to sell to the media, to sell to your leadership, sell to the campaign back in D.C. This is obvious. They're going to think it's genius, because what you do is you basically take this huge, totally unwieldy state that it's so hard to run a campaign in, and you basically say, "Okay, look. We're not going to run this like a state campaign. We're not going to run it like we run a campaign in Delaware or Oklahoma or Tennessee or Kentucky. We're going to run this like you run a national campaign." So, in essence, we divided it into four nations based on the voting characteristics and the demographics and everything in those areas, and everything fell into place from that. It was really quite remarkable.

Williams: And you had no problem adjusting to being the person working for the person who had been your opponent for—

Lacy: No. No, and it's interesting, because since I've been at the Dole Institute, I've found out that our party is pretty dramatically different from the Democrats in that respect. There is pretty much a clique of men and women, and "clique" is probably not a bad word, I guess, and you can't say sorority or fraternity because it's coed. But it's kind of an informal group of men and women who work on almost all the Republican presidential campaigns, and people come and go from that group, and a candidate will always have a few of their own unique people that have been attached to them for various ways. But as you staff up a campaign, on our side of the aisle one of the big missions of a successful nominee is to immediately reach out and pull in the best people from the other campaigns, because a national campaign is huge and you've got to have a lot of really competent people and you want people who can work with you and who are loyal, but you've got to have people who have quality, too.

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So that's why Lee gave his blessing ultimately for me to go to Dole, is he figured he was losing me for now, but ultimately if he was successful, he'd get back a valuable piece of the general election campaign. He was right.

Williams: So did you have expectations of a high position in the White House?

Lacy: No. No, I didn't at all. I really wanted to stay in politics. I wasn't interested in going back to the White House.

Ronald Reagan had been kind of a labor of love that I'd been interested in ever since he gave the speech in '64, which I'm not sure I saw in '64, but I saw it after '64 as I got older, for Barry Goldwater. But he became somebody that I was really attached to. I was never really attached to President Bush in that way. I had a lot of respect for him and all, but it was, no, I really kind of wanted to go back into my business, and so I did. I did four or five campaigns in the '90 election cycle.

Williams: Did that include Dole in the state or was that '92?

Lacy: No, that was '92. That was '92.

Williams: So you were involved in that, too?

Lacy: Yes.

Williams: What was that like?

Lacy: I actually worked for the Senate campaign and worked for the PAC at that time. For the Senate campaign, Jo-Anne called me up one day and said, "The senator would like for you just to go out." Mike Glassner was going to run the campaign. Mike had been a longtime aide to the senator and remained a longtime aide for a long time. "Mike's going to run the campaign, and the senator just wants you to go out. We're not going to have a difficult campaign, but we just want to make sure it stays that way. So just go out and work with Mike and do that and spend as much time as you need out

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there. Then the second part of what he wants you to do for the PAC is there's a good possibility the Republicans could pick up both houses of the legislature out there, and we want you to go out and we want to make some significant investments in these races, and we want you to go out and make sure. We're not going to just give them the money. We want you to do like the RNC would do with our money. We want you to go out and figure out the best way to spend the money and then make sure it's spent that way."

So that was my goal in '92. I had very, very little contact with the senator that year, and he really pretty much stayed out of the campaign. Where he'd meddled quite a bit in the '88 campaign, he really pretty much stayed out of this because he had much bigger fish to fry and because there was never really much of a campaign to it.

Williams: It's interesting you say that, because I think it was Mike Glassner who told me that they deliberately put a presence in every single county in the state during that campaign.

Lacy: Yes. That was part of the idea of making sure that nothing happened. The whole campaign was premised on the notion that Dole should not have a campaign, but that you don't sit around and assume that that's going to be the case. We knew the president was going to have a very difficult reelection campaign, and we knew that he had some issues that he was going to have to deal with, and we just wanted to insulate Bob Dole from that.

In retrospect, there's no way Dole could have lost in '92 anyway. His defining campaign was '74, and he would have stayed in the Senate for as long as he wanted to. But our mission was just to make sure. So Glassner really worked hard and we did that. We ran television. We ran it like it was a real campaign. So I don't want to misconvey anything. The idea was to make sure it never became a real campaign, but we did that by running it as if it were.

Williams: Looking back at Dole's attitude in '92, and with him not necessarily being the presidential candidate in '96, do you think he would have run again in '98?

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Lacy: Do I think he would have run? I never asked him that question. I'm sure Rick did, in his interview. I would have been astounded if he would not have run for reelection in '98, because I assumed—now, are you saying if he had not stepped down as senator or as the Leader?

Williams. No. Let me ask it in an entirely different way. From Dole's perspective in '92, was he engaged in his last run for the Senate or not?

Lacy: I wasn't aware if he was, and I would have been surprised if he was thinking that way. You've interviewed Scott Reed and others. I think he very reluctantly decided to step down from that in '96, and that reluctance indicates to me that he probably would have run again in '98. But I'd never discussed that with Bob Dole. It's a great question, though.

Williams: So, anything else going on in your life between '92 and '96 that we ought to cover?

Lacy: The only thing that is directly relevant to the Dole Institute is that I was selected as a fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government in early '91, and I only mention that because that really prepared me for this job, and when I got the call about this job, I immediately had a context and quickly developed a vision for what I wanted to do with this job because I had been there and seen what I consider the gold standard of political institutes operate. So that was an interesting experience, but that really has nothing to do with Bob Dole, but it does have a lot to do with this Institute here.

Williams: How long were you at Harvard?

Lacy: I was a fellow for one semester. That's the standard length there.

Williams: How did you get involved then in the '96 campaign?

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Lacy: I had done Fred Thompson's race in '94, and Fred, because he was filling Vice President [Albert] Gore [Jr.]'s unexpired term—it was technically a special election in 1994—he was sworn into the Senate immediately after his election. President Clinton was making a speech, I believe it was on the budget, and Dole's office—sometimes Dole would call you and talk to you. He talked—and I'm sure you've heard this ad infinitum. He would talk to thousands of people, because he wanted to always be out touching base and he always wanted to get different perspectives and he always wanted to make sure he was getting the right word from his staff and the people who were close to him. I don't recall if he called me or not—it was probably Jo-Anne or somebody—and said, “Hey, you know, the senator was just thinking, what do you think about Fred Thompson doing the response to President Clinton?” He will have been sworn in and everything.

I said, “That would be, as far as I'm concerned, a ten strike.”

They said, “We'll have the senator call and ask.” I gave Fred a heads-up, because he was honored to be picked.

So I had stayed in touch with Dole, and I think that those of us who had been involved previously had a presumption that he would most likely run in '96. So at the end of '94, a small group of us started meeting at the end of November, probably, maybe mid-November, and kind of like talking it through what we needed to do and everything. We started meeting with them.

I had a student come up to me one day here and say, “Why did Bob Dole run against Bill Clinton? I mean, he got clobbered. Clinton was extraordinarily popular. Why would you guys even do that?”

I said at the time, well, at the end of '94, Bill Clinton had suffered the most devastating congressional election, along with Watergate, that I had ever witnessed in my political career, and he was extraordinarily unpopular. He was viewed as being way out of touch and a liberal, and his job rating was horrible. I said, so at the time Bob Dole decided to get in the race, it was the absolute rational logical decision to make. So it started up at the end of '94.

Williams: As I recall—and now I'm going to be relying a lot on Bob Woodward's—

Lacy: Woodward's book is generally, with a couple of exceptions, spot on.

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Williams: Okay. I want you to talk about the exceptions. But I got the sense that you were preparing material for Bob Dole, and what was sort of essential to that was trying to steer him away from the mistakes of the past.

Lacy: Yes. I wish I had some of the materials, and they probably are down in the archives somewhere. I should probably go down there and poke around sometime, on the '88 campaign and see what we have.

Yes, I was very concerned. I gave him a memo, and I don't even remember it now. Maybe if we do a second one of these, I can try to find some of this and look over and prepare better. I should have prepared better for today. But I remember giving him a memo that kind of outlined the four or five things—I forget what they were at this point—that were real potential issues that he needed to think through before he made the decision to run. You might need to prompt me, because, I guess, actually, I could have reread Bob's book [*The Choice*] last night and would have known all of this, because he worked very hard on that book and we cooperated very closely with him.

Williams: One thing I remember is—and I thought this was really interesting—you compared a baseball team to a football team.

Lacy: I think I compared a baseball team to a basketball team, I thought.

Williams: Maybe so.

Lacy: I thought so. I'm trying to remember the analogy I made, Brien. Again, this is all kind of groggy at this point. I could have sworn it was baseball and basketball or maybe football and basketball, and the reason, I was trying to say in one there's total chaos, a basketball game doesn't really have a plan, it kind of develops its own flow, and you let the people determine it. I said and a political campaign needs to work more like the other one. Maybe it was football and basketball. It needs to be a little bit more planned out. In a football game you have a game plan, you know the other team's tendencies, you assign people to do things.

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I would like to go back and read that before I answer that question, because you've clearly caught me on a day when I'm not prepared for all that. You're going deeper than I thought on the campaign stuff.

Williams: Another thing that I picked up there was your having encouraged Dole to take a more moderate line of thought, and Mari Maseng just said, "No, absolutely not." Does that ring a bell?

Lacy: I think there was a fundamental disagreement all along on exactly how to approach things, and I'm not sure that Mari and I were totally in opposition over this, although as Scott Reed and I got deeper into the campaign, he and a lot of the people he had gathered into the campaign and I did have a very fundamental disagreement on that.

I think my view, Brien, was let Dole—not let Dole be Dole, which is the way that a lot of people had always felt you should do it, and not let's reinvent Bob Dole, but rather let's take Bob Dole and let's look at his record in a rigorous, systematic way, let's find out where he's been on all these important issues, and let's make sure people are aware of that, because he does—as I said at the outset when we first started talking—he may not be perceived as a conservative movement type, but if you look where he comes down, it's almost always on the conservative side.

So what I did is I began a systematic plan, working through Sheila Burke and her folks in the Majority Leader's office, a systematic plan going through a series of issues that were critical according to our survey research, and finding out precisely what his record was on those issues so that we could emphasize those issues without shifting him around and changing his personality and changing his style. I'm not sure that I remember that Mari and I were the ones who really had the clashes on that. Now, she and I always had different maybe definitions of how to do things, but I think directionally I thought we were closer than that, as I remember.

Williams: Who were you having clashes with?

Lacy: I didn't have clashes with anybody at the outset, but very clearly by early '96, it wasn't personally with Scott, but very clearly, he apparently had lost confidence in our

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polling firm, did not like the media people, those folks were right directly under my control. I absolutely thought they were the best and thought getting rid of them was a mistake, and so the campaign kind of split into two camps, and there was kind of my wing of it and then there—three, I would say. Then there was kind of Scott and his people and then there was kind of like everybody else. I think Scott's folks convinced him that it was going to ultimately split and it was going to be him or me, and that he needed to make the first move, and I think he saw his opportunity and he took it. I, frankly, never took it personally. He's a contributor to the Dole Institute, and I wouldn't say that we're best of friends, but I've had him out for programs and get along fine with him. But it was pretty bitter at the time.

Williams: What happened to the vulcans in '96? Where were they?

Lacy: The vulcans?

Williams: [unclear].

Lacy: Yes. Well, a lot of the people in the '88 campaign were not part of the '96 campaign. Some of that was conscious on Scott's part. Some of it was, frankly, we wanted and I advised Scott at different times, try to get different people around because if you bring in the same old crowd, you'll fall into the "Let Dole be Dole" mentality, and I said, "I think there's a middle ground here that you can make work strategically without modifying who he is, letting him stay true to himself, but at the same time making sure that we don't get the same people and create a perception that the people who drove his '88 campaign plan into the ditch are driving his '96 plan into the ditch."

So there was a lot of that. I don't know that people were consciously cut out, but clearly there was concern about not just getting the people who'd done it before back in the exact same places, but getting the best people for the job. From the outside, I had just been through Fred's race, had actually moved to Tennessee and run it. I did not want management of the campaign. I'm sure I could have had it, and in retrospect, it would have changed a lot of things, but I would have been unhappy with it and, frankly, wouldn't have done that good of a job. So I was the one who said, "We need a campaign

manager, and I will serve as deputy chairman for strategy, media, and polling.” So that was the way we structured it.

Ultimately, that structure was probably flawed. I should have probably had Scott reporting to me, which I probably could have done at the outset, but I didn’t want that day-to-day pounding that a campaign manager takes, which I just went through for six months and it almost killed me with Fred Thompson’s campaign. I didn’t want to put myself through that pounding, because I’d just been through it for several months and wasn’t prepared to do that, but also felt an obligation and a desire to be part of it.

Williams: I’m just trying to relate an element of the ’88 campaign to the ’96. The pre-Brock people—and I know we’ve talked to some of them who have recollections of going up and working in New Hampshire, for example, really strongly for Dole and whatnot. Where was that element in ’96?

Lacy: There was really no place. Like I said, there was a conscious discussion about, “Okay, does everybody just kind of like automatically get a job?” There were people who worked in the ’88 campaign who I wouldn’t want to hire for the ’96 race. Dole was the frontrunner in ’96. I offended friends, too, and I’m sure some of them have addressed this, and I felt Dole was entitled to the best that we could get. The ’88 campaign, we had a lot of good, energetic, loyal young people, but they were not the best. They were the best we could get at the time, but we were not the front-running campaign, and there were a lot of other people getting talented folks out there. So I said from the outset—and I think most people agreed with me—“Let’s get the best people that we can get for this campaign,” because I felt we had that obligation to Bob Dole.

Williams: What are the exceptions you feel—where did Bob Woodward not characterize the ’96—

Lacy: Oh, they were very minor things and not even worth talking about, Brien. I think one time he called me the deputy campaign manager when I was actually the deputy chairman, and very little piddly things. There were a couple of other places, but, again, I didn’t reread his book, so I don’t remember. I think he probably got 98 percent of that

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right, and I thought that along with Richard Ben Cramer's book, *What It Takes* on the '88 election is probably the single best—most accurate, I will say, that I can personally—of course I can personally vouch for that, but it was a highly accurate portrayal of what was going on in the campaign.

Williams: We could be talking about the Hollywood speech and the Philadelphia speech and whatnot, but I think it's not a very good use of our time, probably.

Lacy: Yes, unless you want to come back and do some more. I'll leave that up to you.

Williams: A few things that are of interest. You said that you thought Dole was an intuitive, not intellectual conservative. Can you expand a little bit on that?

Lacy: I think that a person who is a movement conservative approaches everything with a certain set of principles which—and this is true of any ideologue—which I would call them principles. Some people might say they're preconceived notions. But it's kind of a set of ideas of how you judge things and would generally come to a conclusion about a particular issue based upon that set. I think Bob Dole had a set of core values, but I don't think those core values were the same as an intellectual conservative would say. But the reason I say he is an intuitive conservative, he would land on his feet on the conservative side on most issues, and I think it's more or less because as he thought through, that was his common sense position more than it related to any historical or philosophical point. It was more like, "This seems to be the best solution." I would say he's more of a pragmatist.

Williams: This thought struck me—

Lacy: Excuse me for interrupting. I should really make clear very, very—and this is what we tried to convey in '96. If you look at his votes over, at that point, thirty-six years of Congress, he was remarkably consistent as a conservative. There were deviations, but if you looked at the whole body of work, he was an 88-92 percent conservative. What I always failed to convey inside the '96 campaign was, "This is your message. This is it.

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The man has a proven track record. He's shown over the years that he is a conservative and that he's the right choice for this." So that was a point I wanted to add that in, because he had strong core values that always motivated him and moved him.

Williams: But it's also true that one of the reasons why it's harder probably for a legislator to run for president than for a governor, say, is because you have this long history of votes and the opposition can always find a day when you appeared to vote the wrong side because it's—

Lacy: Absolutely, and flip-flop, sure. No doubt.

Williams: So it's a liability.

Lacy: No doubt. Oh, yes, it's a liability. If there's a way to show the context, I would say Dole would be in great shape. But you can't show context of a thirty-six year in Congress in a ten-second sound bite or a thirty-second TV ad or even a four-page direct mail piece.

I think there's one other liability, though, that exists for legislative candidates running for president. When I say "legislative," I mean the Senate or House. I think after they've been there a long time, they learn that there is, like almost everything else—oral history, running the Dole Institute, whatever—there is a lingo that goes along with being there every day and doing business there every day, and that lingo is not the way that you communicate with the average person on the street, and so I think that makes it very challenging for those folks as well.

We're going to see something very unique. I'm trying to remember the last time that two individuals with technically no executive experience have been the major party nominations to be president. So it's going to be fun to see how this one turns out. But I will say about both McCain and Obama, they haven't been in the leadership. McCain has been there quite a long time, but has never been in the leadership. Obama, I don't believe has been in the leadership. So they haven't kind of gotten absorbed into the whole business of doing business in Congress, like a Leader would be. That may be a plus for them in some respect.

Williams: You also said—and I was intrigued by this—that Dole was a meddler, not a micromanager.

Lacy: Yes.

Williams: I think this was when you were giving advice to Scott Reed when he was coming on board.

Lacy: Yes. Yes, there's a distinct difference there. Bob Dole would never tell somebody, "I want you to do this, this, this, this, and this." He was far too busy to go to that level, and, frankly, most of the people he had around him, not all of them, but most of the people who he had around him were pretty competent, pretty hardworking people who were, in most cases, pretty loyal to the guy as well.

What he did do is he did kind of like cast seeds of doubt at times and he would kind of like look around and ask somebody, "Is he doing this right?" What happened is that in his world often, he would, I think unintentionally, not intentionally, unintentionally sewed seeds of doubt in people and create issues where issues should not be created. He might ask somebody, "Well, what do you think about the job they're doing over in the campaign?" or, "What do you think about this?" "Do you think that's the right approach?" That's his style, and it's the style that made him such a successful Leader, was to consult lots of people. But if you look at guys who are elected president, generally speaking, they've got one or a small cadre of individuals around them that, in effect, they listen to them on virtually everything as it relates to the campaign. Not the world, but the campaign.

I basically felt that Senator Dole would be far better served if he had three or four strong people around him and then if he didn't really go out, because a lot of times he would ask people their opinion on things who had no background or no experience whatsoever in politics or a campaign, but he might respect their opinion on agricultural issues. He might say, "Well, what do you think about the campaign in Iowa?" Then if the person has any kind of a personal agenda, you create problems that way.

Williams: And that person's expressions would have an effect on the senator.

Lacy: Yes, they affect his confidence in the team. A lot of this goes back to this isn't magic; this is people working together and developing some kind of chemistry. Eventually, I felt, if he was going to be successful in '96, he was going to have to turn the campaign over to the campaign and he was going to have to lead, but he was going to have to be a more traditional candidate in the sense that he was going to have to do some things differently.

Williams: Did he get there?

Lacy: He got a long way, a real long way. I remember practicing the announcement speech and preparing it and all kinds of ways, doing the Hollywood speech, which was really amazing, in retrospect, and is quite a story. Yes, I think he got there in many, many ways.

I think that, unfortunately, a couple things happened along the way. Number one, Steve Forbes chose to really—and I don't say this about Mr. Forbes personally; I say it about his campaign, but ultimately the candidate's got to accept the responsibility for what the campaign does. The Forbes campaign really savaged Bob Dole in the early primary states, and there was one situation where I remember doing a focus group in Arizona where Forbes had spent millions in advertising. You go into it being pretty objective about things, because you're never successful in politics if you're not pretty objective about stuff. You go into it thinking out loud, "Well, it's going to be interesting to see how his TV ads have affected things." And you go and you sit there and you hear people say, like, "Who the hell is Bob Dole to think he should be president? He's not a good Republican at all. He's terrible. He should be a Democrat. We need a hero. We need a real American like Steve Forbes."

You hear stuff like that and you wonder, "Oh, my gosh. Has it gotten to the stage where—?" And this was really quite disillusioning because I didn't believe in any campaign I worked with my role was to fool the people. I thought my role was to inform and give them reasons to be for my guy. But to sit there listening to Bob Dole being compared to Steve Forbes that way, that was quite remarkable and eye-opening. So in

essence, what he did, by using huge amounts of personal money, is he created a horribly negative environment in those few primary states for Bob Dole and made it very possible for Dole to lose the nomination by losing a string of states.

But ultimately, I still felt all along Dole would win, because once they got out of those early states, he couldn't damage him with the news media. They were raising all kinds of electability questions, but you could never damage Dole's character with them, not a guy like Forbes. But I knew that Dole would still be the nominee, irregardless of all this, if they just stuck to the plan and everything.

The second thing that happened to Dole that ultimately derailed him in '96 is Bill Clinton became the brilliant politician and communicator that we all now know he was, and learned how to triangulate with the Democrats and the Republicans. The Republicans turned him into a very good president, and now they've passed welfare reform, balanced the budget and basically came up with a record to run on in '96 that any Republican almost would be proud of from at least '95, '96, not '93 and '94. That derailed the whole—

Williams: You wanted to talk about contact with Dole after the '96 campaign.

Lacy: Yes. In 1997, I had gone in '96 after leaving—my dad had been trying to get me to go into the family business for quite some time. So after leaving the campaign in '96, I took about three months off and then I joined Dad's company [Sophie Mae Candy Co.], our family company, and actually relocated out here in Johnson County, Kansas, which, one of our factories was just a little bit, about twenty minutes north of where we lived in Wyandotte County. We had four or five places I could have moved, but I'd spent a lot of time out here and thought we'd really enjoy living out here. My wife came out with me. We checked it out for a few days. She really liked the place. So we moved out here. So I based my operations out of this company up in Edwardsville in Wyandotte County.

One day Jo-Anne Coe called me and said, "The senator would like to come down and tour your plant."

And I said, "Well, I would love to have the senator do that, Jo-Anne, but I can't really imagine any reason that Bob Dole would want to come down here and look at a candy plant."

And she said to me in so many words, “You idiot. He doesn’t really want to see your plant. He wants to come to see you.”

He came down. He did the perfunctory tour, and then he said, “Can we spend some time in your office?” So we went into my office and shut the door and sat down. Basically, he looked across the desk at me and he said, “I just want to make sure that you and I are personally okay.”

I said, “Senator, you were okay with me the day after this happened. This was never a problem between you and me.” And I just thought that was remarkable that he had come personally all that way to say that, and I just found that to be amazing, totally mind-boggling.

I’d also, though, add something that happened right after the campaign, like the day after the campaign. He called to say, “I’m sorry it’s turned out this way. Are you going to be okay?”

I said, “I’m going to be fine.”

He said, “I’d really appreciate it if you don’t go out and say anything about me.”

I said, “Senator, the problem is not me and you. It’s never been me and you.”

He said, “Okay.”

I said, “By the way, you write this down. You’re going to be the Republican nominee. They have told you that you’re in serious trouble. The media believes you’re in serious trouble. Your own campaign has leaked that you’re in serious trouble, to allow them to make this change, to get rid of me and my folks. But you’re going to win the nomination, because once you get outside these early states, you’re going to be untouchable. He can’t go in and he doesn’t have enough personal money to go in, or he’s not going to spend enough personal money to go in and do to you what he did in these early states.”

He said, “Is there anything else I should know about?”

I said, “Yes. They’ve spent way too much money. They’ve hired too many people.”

It’s funny, because it goes back to ’88, where I got supplanted because I had not spent enough money, in the Brock people’s eyes. In my eyes, we’re in the opposite situation, I’d been supplanted this time, not because we’d spent too much, but the people

who were in charge, who supplanted me, had really spent all of his money at that point, and so they had a struggle from that point forward.

Williams: Now tell us about the ride to Kansas City.

Lacy: It was actually a ride from Kansas City to Overland Park last April, which would have been 2007. You know I have to check the chronology on this, Brien, but it may have been 2006. I just can't recall. It probably was 2006. He came to Kansas City to give a speech, and he did not have time because of his flights and his speech and all, to come out to the Institute. But I needed to see him. He invited me to come down for coffee, so I went down to his hotel and saw him.

He had had a near-death experience in 2005, when he had had his hip replacement and then he fell and had the brain damage and everything, and all that was recounted in *One Soldier's Story*. So he was a lot better than he was then, but still looking a little bit frail, a lot more frail than he does today. We met for about an hour, had coffee, and he told me to eat some breakfast if I wanted some. And about halfway through, his two travel assistants walked in, very casually dressed, like wearing shorts and t-shirts. He said, "Oh, you know so-and-so and so-and-so," Alana [phonetic] and Shawn [phonetic], I think. He says, "You know Alana and Shawn. After we finish here, they're going to down to the plaza and go shopping, and you and I are going to go out and see some voters in Kansas."

And I'm sitting there thinking, "Oh, hmm. This is really interesting." Now, you've got to picture this, because I had worked for Dole at this point at the Institute and in his campaigns and at Campaign America for years and knew him very well. But never once in my life had he and I gone out someplace by ourselves. Mike Glassner was almost always with him on the campaigns and anywhere he went, and so Mike Glassner was always responsible for getting him around. And everybody who knows Bob Dole well knows that he's basically in constant pain, he has no use of his right arm and very limited use of his left. So I'm sitting there thinking that I had driven my little tiny car. As I had pulled into his hotel, I realized that my gas is almost on empty. Okay? I'm in this little car, and he is a really big guy.

Well, it was hilarious, because he says to me, “We’re going to go down and see voters.” So we finished our meeting.

I say, “Where do you want to go?”

He says, “I want to go to Kansas City, Kansas.”

I said, “Senator, I know where it is, but I don’t know how to get there from here.”

I said, “I can’t visualize how to make that happen in an efficient way,” because he had limited time.

He said, “All you do is go across the bridge.”

I said, “What bridge, Senator?”

He says, “The bridge over there.”

I said, “Do you know which bridge, Senator?”

“Nah,” he says, “we’ll ask somebody. They’ll know.”

So we went and asked somebody, and they didn’t have a clue which bridge it was.

He says, “Well, where can you take me?”

I said, “What if we go to Overland Park?”

“Okay, let’s go down to Overland Park. You can take me into some banks and stuff.”

So we drove down. I spread the seat out as far as I could in the car and drove him down to Overland Park, said, “Senator, I’m going to have to stop and get gas at some point,” which eventually I did.

We stopped and he’d get out and go in, I’d go in with him, he’d shake hands, say hello, and people would just come up and swarm him and everything.

We did two or three of the banks, and they were a little bit awkward. There was no flow to it. So I realized—something hit me, and I had never done advance work in my entire life, so I wasn’t trained as an advance guy. If Mike had been there, Mike would have known exactly what to do, and all I had to do was provide the car and hang out with him. But I had never thought about it. I’d never conceived of doing stuff like that. But I thought—something hit me. I had an inspiration. It was like an inspiration from a guy like Mike Glassner or Jim Hooley, who did advance for the ’96 campaign and I knew from the Reagan White House and all this. And all of a sudden I remember there’s this place called Old Town Overland Park, which is just down the road, which are a bunch of

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old-fashioned retail storefronts. So I said, “Senator, do you remember Old Town Overland Park?”

He said, “I think so.”

I said, “Why don’t we go there down there? Because I think we can get you out of the car and then you can just circulate through the downtown area there, rather than stopping and piecemeal hitting.”

So we went out and we walked that area. It’s probably about a mile, I would guess, in about an hour, and it was really incredible, because the man was just—he was mobbed. There weren’t enough people to mob him, actually, there, but everybody would come up to him and say, “Hello,” and, “How are you doing?” and, “What are you doing here?”

He said, “I’m giving a speech over in Missouri, and I thought the best way to give a speech over in Missouri is to come over and see some people in Kansas and get me all fired up to go over there and give a speech.”

I remember at one point we went in this coffee shop and there were two kids in there with long hair and body piercings and tattoos, and they knew who he was. We went into—there were these guys who were putting together—it was a furniture store. These guys were putting together furniture out in front of this furniture store, a couple of African Americans, and they saw him and they said, “There’s Senator Bob Dole!” and they ran over and shook his hand. We went by this craft store, and this lady said, “Come in. We want to take your picture with our quilt.”

We did all of that, and we finally came out and were getting ready to go, and one of the kids from the coffee shop came running up to us and said, “Senator Dole, Senator Dole, I really hate to bother you with this, but—,” and he hands him this sheet of paper. He says, “You’re the most important person I’ll ever meet in my life, and this is my passion and something I really am concerned about, and I want to share this with you.” And he handed it to Dole. He said, “Just if you would look at this website, I’d really appreciate it.” And he turned around and left. It was a website about children being turned into soldiers in Africa.

It was a remarkable day. It was like I know that’s the last day I’ll be on the campaign trail with Bob Dole, because there will never be any more campaigns or anything. I get to see him a lot all the time, but to go out for like an hour and a half and

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two hours and go around and see the old magic nearly, what, ten years later still at work.
Just an incredible guy.

Williams: The retail politician.

Lacy: Yes. It's a lot more than that, though. It's who he was and what he stood for and everything.

Williams: It's after five o'clock.

Lacy: Okay.

Williams: Should we bring this to a close?

Lacy: Yes. Do you want to do some more tomorrow or not? Tomorrow perhaps we can shut it down.

[End of interview]

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