



MILLER CENTER

of Public Affairs

Presidential Oral History Program

2201 Old Ivy Road
PO Box 400406
Charlottesville VA 22904-4406

434.982.2974 *voice*
434.982.4528 *fax*
millercenter.virginia.edu

President George H.W. Bush Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Sigmund Rogich

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Prepared by Jill Abraham, Research Assistant

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SIGMUND ROGICH TIMELINE

Prepared by Jill M. Abraham

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 02/23/01

1988

Fall Rogich oversees production of “comparative commercials,” running between the conventions, depicting Dukakis as Jimmy Carter (“Why go back seven years?,” “I Remember You,” and “Little Girl”), which help bring Bush nine points closer to Dukakis before the Republican Convention. (*The New York Times*, 9/21/1988)

Rogich produces controversial “Boston Harbor” ad. (*The Boston Globe*, 9/20/1988)

Rogich produces the controversial “A Crime Story”, also known as the “revolving door” ad. (*The Boston Globe*, 9/28/1988)

1989

October 4 Rogich’s first day at work as Assistant to the President for Public Events and Initiatives.

Late October Rogich’s first production in new position: Bush’s visit to site of the October 20th California earthquake. (*The Washington Post*, 10/20/1989)

November Rogich plays an instrumental role in coordinating Bush’s “1,000 Points of Light” initiative. (*The New Republic*, 12/11/1989)

Rogich leads advance team for Malta Summit. (*Los Angeles Times*, 11/2/1989)

December Rogich presents Bush’s political message regarding Panama invasion. (*Los Angeles Times*, 1/1/1990)

1990

May Rogich leads advance teams for Gorbachev’s tour of the United States and escorts him on the trip. (*The New York Times*, 5/31/1990)

Fall/Winter Rogich instrumental in producing Bush’s Gulf War image for domestic and foreign audiences. (*The Observer*, Nov. 25, 1990)

1992

- January* Bush names Sherrie Rollins, chief spokeswoman for ABC News, to head an expanded liaison office dealing with constituent groups and state and local officials, Rogich named Ambassador to Iceland. (*Associated Press*, 1/26/1992)
- September 13* James Baker calls Rogich in Iceland to ask if he'll assume a leading role in president's advertising campaign.
- September 16* Rogich resigns his post as ambassador to Iceland to serve as Bush's campaign advisor for media affairs, heading the "November Team". (*Associated Press*, 9/16/1992)
- November* Company produces the "hillbilly ad," Clinton attack ad. (*The New York Times*, 9/25/1992)
- Rogich produces "The night-of-the-living-dead" ad. (*Houston Chronicle*, 11/6/1992)
- Rogich produces "person-in-the-street" ads, Clinton attack ads. (*The New York Times*, 10/22/1992)
- Rogich produces "gray dots" ad, portraying Bill Clinton as taking both sides on every issue. (*The New York Times*, 10/3/1992)

SIGMUND ROGICH SUGGESTED TOPICS

Prepared by Jill M. Abraham

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 02/23/01

1988 Campaign

How did Rogich get connected with the '88 Bush campaign? What was his specific role? Discuss some of the ads Rogich produced (specifically the "Boston Harbor" and "Revolving Door" ads) and the public's reaction to them.

Image-Making & the Bush Administration

How did Rogich come to join the Bush administration? Why did Stephen Studdert, Rogich's predecessor, leave the Bush administration? What were his specific roles as Assistant to the President for Public Events and Initiatives? With whom did Rogich work most closely? What are the most notable things he did? Did he see his work for the administration as a continuation of his campaign work?

Around the time that Rogich was hired to the Bush administration, newspapers reported that his role would be to sharpen Bush's image. Why was his image fuzzy in the first place, and what did Rogich do to sharpen it? How did Rogich attempt to present Bush? Did working in the aftermath of the Reagan administration pose any particular challenges?

Did Bush resist image management or was he cooperative? Did Bush cooperate with all of Rogich's ideas? What were some of Rogich's ideas that Bush or other members of his administration opposed?

What was Rogich's role in these important events?: Malta Summit, Gorbachev's U.S. visit, public perceptions of the Gulf War, and Panama.

What were the circumstances surrounding Bush's appointment of Rogich as Ambassador to Iceland?

1992 Campaign

Why was Rogich brought back from Iceland to head Bush's campaign advertising team so quickly after he was appointed ambassador? What were his specific roles in the 1992 campaign? What was the campaign's central theme? Describe the dynamics inside the campaign and the atmosphere throughout.

What was the difference between working for the '92 campaign compared to the '88 campaign? What was the difference between working for both Bush campaigns, compared to Reagan's "Tuesday Team" in the 1984 campaign?

The Bush Presidency in Retrospect

What were the strengths and weaknesses of Bush's and his team's public relations and image-making strategy? Was the image that Bush conveyed misunderstood by the public and the press? How does Rogich view the contention that Bush was a president who was out of touch with the masses? How should Bush, especially his image, be viewed by history?

GEORGE BUSH AND THE PUBLIC PRESIDENCY

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- “Bush Accused of Racism in Ad Messages,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 10/24/1988.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

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