President Ronald Reagan
Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Lyn Nofziger

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1958-1966

Noziger works as a Washington, D.C. correspondent and political writer for Copley Newspapers. Prior to this position, Noziger served as a reporter or editor for a number of small California newspapers.

1965


1966

January

Noziger agrees to take a leave of absence from Copley Newspapers to serve as Press Secretary for Reagan’s gubernatorial campaign. (Noziger, p. 3)

February

Though he will not officially begin work until the end of the February, Noziger attends a strategy session at the Reagan’s Pacific Palisades home early in the month. (Noziger, p. 34)

April

Noziger accompanies Reagan on a trip to Detroit to address the Detroit Economic Club. (Noziger, p. 84)

December

Noziger and Tom Reed arrange a meeting at the Reagan residence to discuss the possibility of a Reagan presidential bid in 1968. Also at the meeting are Phil Battaglia, Henry Salvatori, Taft Schreiber, and Ed Mills. The group decides to create a “draft organization” to explore a Reagan candidacy. F. Clifton White is recruited to head the effort, which results in an unofficial “Reagan for President” organization that will last until the 1968 Republican National Convention. (Noziger, p. 65-66)

1967

January

Reagan is sworn in as Governor of California on the 3rd.

Noziger joins the Reagan Administration as Press Secretary. Early in the term, Chief-of-Staff Phil Battaglia changes Noziger’s title to Communications Director. (Noziger, p. 66)
In the fall, Noziger accompanies Reagan to the National Governors’ Conference held aboard a ship sailing from New York to the U.S. Virgin Islands. (Noziger, p. 85)

In the midst of rumors and press stories reporting that he is about to be fired, Noziger brings a letter of resignation to Reagan. After discussing the matter with Reagan, Noziger agrees to stay through the 1968 election. (Noziger, p. 83)

1968

April

Noziger joins Reagan on a trip to Washington, D.C. to address the Women’s National Press Club on welfare issues. Martin Luther King Jr. is shot the day the speech is given. (Noziger, p. 70)

June

Reagan agrees to be a favorite son candidate for president in California. Noziger supports the move, in part, because it would give Reagan “a significant block of delegates if he ever decided to become a real candidate.” (Noziger, p. 72)

August

At the Republican National Convention, former U.S. Senator William Knowland approaches Noziger with the suggestion that Reagan abandon his favorite son candidacy and actively try to win the nomination. Noziger takes Knowland to see Reagan who agrees to the plan and announces his decision the day of the nominations. (Noziger, p. 73)

October

On the 1st, Noziger leaves the Administration to manage Max Rafferty’s U.S. Senate campaign. Following the election, Noziger and Bob Tuttle start a private political consulting firm, Index Associates, based in Sacramento. (Noziger, pp. 87, 93)

1969

In July, Noziger accepts the position of Deputy Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations under Nixon.

1971

At President Nixon’s request, Noziger joins the Republican National Committee as Deputy Chairman for Communications. (Bancroft Oral History, p. iii)

1972

At Reagan’s suggestion, Noziger becomes Executive Director of the California Committee for the Re-election of the President in January. Nixon will carry California by more than one million votes. (Bancroft Oral History, p. iii)

1973

Noziger returns to Sacramento to open a political public relations firm, the Lyn Noziger Company.
1974

During the final years of the Reagan gubernatorial administration, Nofziger heads meetings of an informal group of Reagan advisors, commonly referred to as the "Nofziger Group." According to Peter Hannaford, "the basic mission of the Nofziger Group was to monitor the national political picture" with an eye toward a possible Reagan presidential bid. (Peter Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1983, p. 32)

1975

January

Reagan's gubernatorial term expires.

Nofziger, Peter Hannaford, Michael Deaver, Edwin Meese, John Sears and Senator Paul Laxalt (R-NV) begin to hold regular meetings. The group calls itself the Madison Group or "M" Group. The group essentially takes the place of the Nofziger Group. Its purpose is to explore the possibility of a Reagan presidential candidacy in 1976. John Sears emerges as the leader of the group. (Hannaford, p. 65)

July

Nofziger closes the doors on his political consulting firm to go to Washington, D.C. to work on the formation of The Citizens for Reagan Committee, which officially opens its doors in Washington, D.C. Senator Laxalt serves as its National Chairman. John Sears is Executive Vice-chairman, assuming the position of campaign director. The purpose of the Committee is to explore Reagan's chances for success in a 1976 presidential bid. The Committee begins fundraising and direct mail efforts. Reagan still has not formally announced his candidacy. (Bancroft Oral History, p. iii; Hannaford, p. 68)

October

Reagan gives his permission for a late-November announcement of his candidacy for president. On the 17th, the M Group meets in Washington, D.C. to review campaign plans and staff assignments. Nofziger is named Press Secretary. He will later serve as Director of the California primary campaign and as Director of Convention Activities during the Republican National Convention in Kansas City. (Hannaford, p. 75; Bancroft Oral History, p. iii)

November

On the 20th, Reagan formally announces his candidacy for the presidency.

1976

February

President Ford wins the New Hampshire primary.

March

Reagan wins the North Carolina primary.
May
Reagan wins an overwhelming majority of delegates from primaries in Indiana, Georgia and Alabama, putting him in the lead in the race for national convention delegates for the first time.

Reagan returns to California, where Noziger is now heading up Reagan's California primary campaign.Acknowledging the importance of the primary, Noziger says, "The one who wins California is the likely winner at the National Convention." (Noziger, p. 192; U.S. News & World Report, 6/7/76)

June
Reagan wins the California Republican primary.

July
In an effort to halt President Ford's momentum, Reagan announces his selection of Senator Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa) as a running mate.

As Director of Convention Activities, Noziger directs the campaign's preparations for the Republican National Convention in Kansas City.

August
President Ford wins the Republican nomination for president at the Republican National Convention. Following Reagan's defeat, Noziger serves as a speechwriter and advisor for vice presidential nominee Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) and is active in special projects for the Ford campaign. (Bancroft Oral History, p. iii)

1977
Reagan's political action committee, Citizens for the Republic (CFTR), officially opens its doors in Santa Monica, California. Reagan is Chairman and Noziger is named Executive Vice Chair and will run the day-to-day operations of the organization. In addition to launching fundraising efforts for congressional candidates, the CFTR issues a monthly newsletter for contributors and organizes grass-roots workshops on campaigning for Republicans in a number of major cities. (Noziger, pp. 213-232)

Noziger is among a small group of individuals who meet regularly at the Reagan residence "to compare notes on major issues and the political climate in the country." (Hannaford, p. 146)

1978
Reagan and the CFTR devote a significant amount of time and effort campaigning on behalf of Republicans during the 1978 congressional elections.

1979
Reagan's presidential exploratory committee, Reagan for President, is officially launched with Sears in control. Noziger is named to lead up fundraising efforts as Deputy Chair of Finance. (Noziger, p. 254)

March
August  Nofziger resigns from the campaign following disputes with campaign chief John Sears. Deaver takes over Nofziger’s fundraising responsibilities for the campaign. Nofziger initially declines an offer from Reagan to take over as paid Chairman of CFTR. Nofziger later calls Reagan and agrees to take the position, “but on a nonpaying basis.” (The New York Times, 9/29/1979; Nofziger, pp. 235-236)

Nofziger returns to work as a political consultant in California. (Nofziger, p. 238)

November  On the 13th, Reagan formally announces that he is an official candidate for the GOP presidential nomination.

On Thanksgiving Day, following disputes with Sears, Deaver leaves the campaign. Ironically, it had been Deaver who had brought Sears into the campaign. (Deaver, Behind the Scenes, p. 86-87)

1980

January  Nofziger criticizes Sears’ management of the Reagan campaign. "They have him so intimidated, so convinced that he shouldn’t speak out for what he believes that he’s not Ronald Reagan," says Nofziger. Following Reagan’s defeat in Iowa, Nofziger comments, "This just proves you can’t run a rose garden campaign -- without a rose garden." (The Washington Post, 1/25/1980, 2/27/1980)

February  On the eve of the New Hampshire primary, Reagan decides to make a number of senior staff changes in the campaign, including the replacement of campaign manager John Sears with William Casey. Prior to the announcement, Dick Wirthlin calls Nofziger and asks if he would be willing to return to the campaign if Sears were to leave. Nofziger tells Wirthlin that he cannot return until after the June primary because of existing commitments to clients. (The New York Times, 2/27/1980; Nofziger, p. 238)

May  It is reported that if Reagan wins the presidential nomination, he will "shake up the leadership of the Republican National Committee." Nofziger is cited as one who is in the running for the Deputy Chairman post. (Newsweek, 5/19/1980)

Deaver contacts Nofziger on behalf of Reagan and asks him to return to the campaign as Press Secretary, replacing Ed Gray. Nofziger agrees to return to the campaign after the June primary. (Nofziger, pp. 239-240)
June  

July  
Reagan accepts the nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit. Commenting on whether the Ford vice presidential matter hurt the campaign, Nofziger says “I don’t know why anyone should have any regrets. We’ve got a fine vice-presidential candidate.” (U.S. News & World Report, 7/28/1980)

November  
Reagan is elected the 40th President of the United States on the 4th.

Nofziger announces that his role as Press Secretary will end on the 30th. “I had a discussion with Mr. Meese yesterday,” says Nofziger, “and we made a deal. I will stay around until the 30th of November if he will leave me alone after that. My Christmas present is being free again.” (The New York Times, 11/10/1980)

December  
Baker approaches Nofziger with a proposal to join the Administration as Assistant to the President for Political Affairs. After some consideration, Nofziger accepts the position. The official announcement indicates that Nofziger will provide political advice and liaison with the Republican National Committee, the Senate and House campaign committees, and “other representative organizations.” Nofziger will also become involved with personnel decisions in the departments and agencies. (Nofziger, pp. 271-272; The Christian Science Monitor, 12/24/1980)

January  
Reagan is inaugurated on the 20th.

March  
On the 30th, John Hinckley, Jr. shoots Reagan during an attempted assassination. Press Secretary James Brady is also shot during the encounter. Nofziger accompanies other senior advisors to George Washington University Hospital. In the wake of the assassination attempt, Nofziger holds press conferences with the media at the hospital. (Nofziger, pp. 292-294)

April  
Nofziger denies reports that he was upset at being passed over as interim White House Press Secretary during Brady’s recovery. “You notice they didn’t quote anybody,” he responds. “I’m very happy where I am.” (The Washington Post, 4/12/1981)

July  
Responding to reports that he will probably leave the Administration by the end of the year, Nofziger says, “There’s nothing new in that. I came here with the pledge to only stay a year.” (The Washington Post, 7/18/1981)
Noziger: 1980-1984

September
Noziger announces his plan to leave the White House on January 22nd.
Denying reports that his departure is the result of unhappiness with his role in the Administration, Noziger says, "I want to go home. Government is not my bag. I'll be leaving on January 22. I'm not frustrated. I am not unhappy. I know how this game is played." (The New York Times, 9/8/1981)

1982
January
On the 20th, Noziger leaves the White House to start a political consulting firm, Noziger and Bragg Communications, with Mark Bragg.

August
Noziger returns to the Administration for two weeks to help secure passage of the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act.

1983
November
Noziger joins other senior Reagan campaign advisors in Los Angeles for a two day meeting to "discuss themes, media strategy and voter registration based on a memo drafted by Reagan strategist Stuart K. Spencer and pollster Richard R. Wirthlin." Also attending the meeting are Edward J. Rollins, Director of the Reagan-Bush '84 Committee, Deputy Campaign Director Lee Atwater, pollster Robert Teeter, political consultant Charles Black, Campaign Communications Director James Lake and Drew Lewis. (The Washington Post, 11/30/1983)

1984
January
Noziger serves as General Chairman of the Citizens for the Republic and is on leave two days a week from his consulting firm to work on the Reagan-Bush campaign. (The Washington Post, 1/17/1984)

February
Noziger campaigns for Reagan in New Hampshire with the goal of keeping Democrats "from dominating national news with constant attacks on the President." (The Washington Post, 2/25/1984)

August
The Republicans hold their National Convention in Dallas.

October
Noziger briefly rejoins the Reagan campaign plane in the final week of campaigning. When asked by a reporter whether he should be described as a Reagan "adviser," Noziger replies "No, 'hanger-on' would be just fine." (The Washington Post, 10/24/1984)

November
Reagan is re-elected for a second term as President.
LYN NOFZIGER SUGGESTED TOPICS
Prepared by Darby A. Morrisroe
Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2/24/2002

Early Years with Reagan
• Describe the circumstances surrounding your entry into California politics.
• Discuss your service as Press Secretary during Reagan’s 1966 gubernatorial campaign.
• How did you come to serve in Governor Reagan’s Administration?

Advising Governor Reagan
• What were your responsibilities as Assistant to the Governor and Director of Communications? With whom did you work most closely? What activities most occupied your time? What type of advice did Reagan seek from you and his staff?
• How would you characterize Reagan’s relationship with the media during his tenure as Governor?
• Comment on Reagan’s management and leadership style as Governor.
• Discuss Reagan’s 1968 presidential bid.

1976 Campaign
• How did Reagan come to the decision to run for president in 1976?
• Comment on the role of the Nofziger Group and the “M” Group in planning a Reagan presidential bid. Describe the formation of the 1976 campaign organization.
• Discuss your role and responsibilities during the 1976 presidential campaign (i.e., press relations, California primary, Republican National Convention).
• On what matters were you consulted most regularly?
• What were the major challenges you faced as a senior advisor during the 1976 campaign?

1980 Campaign and Transition
• Discuss the importance and activities of the Citizens for the Republic and your service as Executive Vice-Chair.
• Describe your role and responsibilities in the 1980 presidential campaign as Deputy Chair of Finance and Press Secretary. How did your role change from the 1976 campaign? How did the campaigns differ? Describe Reagan’s relationship with the press during the campaign.
• What changes did you observe in candidate Reagan from the 1976 campaign to the 1980 presidential bid?
• What were the major challenges you faced as a senior advisor during the campaign?
• Discuss your departure from and to return to the campaign
• Discuss the campaign’s personnel changes following the 1980 New Hampshire primary. How did the changes affect the campaign’s tone and strategy?
• Comment on the vice presidential selection process and the consideration of a possible “Reagan-Ford” ticket.
• Were you involved in the transition? Describe the process of recruitment and selection of the Cabinet and White House staff. What attributes did Reagan consider most important for his staff and Cabinet officers to possess?
**Assistant to the President for Political Affairs**

- Comment on your initial reluctance to take a position in the Administration.
- Describe your role and responsibilities as Assistant to the President for Political Affairs.
- Discuss the range and type of activities that occupied your time.
- Describe your relationships and interactions with members of the White House staff and Cabinet (Chief of Staff, Counselor to the President, policy development staff, press staff, Office of Public Liaison, cabinet councils, etc.). Discuss the frequency and nature of your interactions with President Reagan.
- Comment on the attempted assassination and its aftermath
- Describe the circumstances surrounding your departure from the Reagan Administration.
- Discuss your brief return to the Administration in 1982 to work on the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act.
- Comment on your role and responsibilities as a senior advisor in Reagan’s 1984 re-election campaign.

**Reagan in Retrospect**

- Discuss your observations of Reagan’s decision-making style. What were the distinctive characteristics of Reagan as a public leader, a legislative leader, and a party leader?
- Having served during the Nixon Administration, you are in a unique position to offer a comparative perspective on presidential style. Discuss parallels and differences observed between Reagan and Nixon.
- What features of Ronald Reagan and his presidency were missed or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Reagan presidency be viewed in historical perspective?
Timelines

- Lyn Nofziger Timeline, prepared by Darby A. Morriseoe, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2/24/2003.

SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY Lyn NOFZIGER


ADVISING GOVERNOR REAGAN


1980 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN


1984 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN


