

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 26, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR DOUG BLASER

FROM: DORRANCE SMITH

Re: Attached Report

Attached please find my report which I hope will serve as constructive thoughts, distilled from the last ten months of on-the-road activity. My attempt is to offer suggestions based on my experiences to further serve the President in the upcoming months of campaigning.

I. PRIMARY SEASON REVIEW

The purpose of this report is to provide suggestions, based on analysis of Presidential travel, during the primaries, which may serve as guidelines for future travel during the upcoming campaign season.

In the eyes of the American public, the image of the President is derived from a kaleidoscope of different sources. The most important image-making sources are the video and stories that emanate from the White House and from the travels of the President.

Unfortunately, a large degree of the video that plays has been to the disadvantage of the image of the President. Consequently, there are numerous stories which we'd like to forget:

1. Ft. Lauderdale - motorcycle policeman falls off cycle on motorcade route (front page of Sunday Washington Post).
2. Miami - wreck on freeway en route drop-by involving pile-up of cars.
3. West Palm Beach to Ft. Lauderdale - rain on the President's motorcade.
4. Senland Farm Mishap - cows soil President's suit.
5. University's reaction to ticket situation at Nebraska commencement exercises.
6. Bowling Green - flashbulb incident.
7. Rain delaying second North Carolina trip. People waiting in Hickory Auditorium for three hours.
8. Vail, Colorado - ski fall on second press day.
9. South Lawn - hitting head on helicopter.
10. North Carolina - announcement of Callaway resignation on Air Force One upstages the entire trip.
11. San Antonia, Texas - Tamale incident.
12. Wilkesboro & Ft. Wayne, Indiana - balloon "flops?"

13. Arlington, Texas - bussing Kilgore Rangerettes.
14. Rogers Morton's Titanic quote with the accompanying photo during the President's visit to Detroit prior to the Michigan primary.
15. Ron Nessen's participation on Saturday Night Live and the follow-up report on the negative White House response.
16. Bryce Harlow, Mel Laird, Rogers Morton meeting criticising White House Staff.
17. Stories on internal White House personality problems, ie. John Osborne's recent New Republic article.
18. Campaign '76 - Jim Jordon vs. Kennerly/Penny.
19. Kissinger's visit to Africa during the Texas primary.
20. Charlotte, North Carolina - Future Homemaker's speech and resulting story regarding the weakness of the speech writing staff.
21. Telling the press that the President plans to be Presidential this week.

Each one of these items have one thing in common: they all reflect negatively on the President. These items do break down into two groups. Items numbered 1 - 7 are uncontrollable; incidents of this variety are simply going to happen. Items numbered 8 - 21 are controllable, some more so than others. In the last eight months no one person or group has made any overall, consistent effort to control the image to the end that the result has been an admixture of stories and related video which, though avoidable in many situations, took place and played to the disadvantage of our candidate.

It must be kept in mind that the response of the viewer is not to the man but to the image. Therefore, it becomes an absolute necessity that some one person or group maintain a constant vigil over the image and over the response. We have control over the candidate; we have partial control over the media. We have used neither of these elements of control to our advantage.

As a means of comparison, read through events numbered 8 - 21 again. Now try to itemize similar situations in the past eight months that have occurred to either Carter or Reagan.

II. BACKGROUND - A LESSON IN LOSING CONTROL

What can be learned from the President's activities in the primary season (January - June) as it relates to his image?

# of days (January 1 - June 8)	160 (100%)
Days in White House	115 (72%)
Days on the Road	45 (28%)
# of cities visited	97
# of events attended	235

What type of picture are the American people being fed? First, it must be established that the picture is fuzzy. It is the kaleidoscope or hodge-podge of information that differs from Tacoma, Washington to Bangor, Maine. But, everyone has some picture or concept, and it is our job to determine: 1) What that picture is and, 2) how to control that picture to our best advantage.

The best understanding of the overall image is through the analysis of television news coverage of the President. Television has taught us that it's not what you say that counts -- it's how the viewer receives the impression. In terms of television coverage, how much of the news came from within the White House versus on the road? At first glance one would say 72% versus 28% in terms of actual news coverage. But, the 72% figure is misleading as no news comes from the White House a full 1/3 of the days he's inside. Meaningful video of him is even more scarce. This means that only 77 days out of 160 days, news emanated from the White House, or less than 50%. 51.8 of the network news coverage of the President presents him in on-the-road situations.

The problem with this situation is two-fold. Once, you lose control when you step out of the White House, and you lose the most powerful tool which we possess, the incumbency. Two, the video of the President on the road looks no different from the video of Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan or Mo Udall. When edited together in three or four minute packages on the nightly news, the President's video playing next to Reagan's video bears little or no difference save the Presidential Seal or Air Force One in the background.

1. PROBLEM

McGovern on the '72 Campaign, "As I think back on it, I see most of the mistakes that I made were made when I was tired. I think that's true of most candidates, and that's going to come across more in the visual medium than in the written."

SOLUTION

The message of the day should be scheduled before 5:00 p.m. in order to get maximum exposure and avoid the tiredness problem. Also, reporters seem to become more negative as they become more tired.

2. PROBLEM

Nixon: "One bad camera angle on television can have far more effect on the election outcome than a major mistake in writing a speech which is then picked up and criticized by the columnists."

SOLUTION

We must be the producers on the road, so the angle and shot is the angle and shot that we want to play. The local stations and networks will want cameras in every alley, and along every motorcade route. We must guard against cameras being in areas where the President may not know he's going to be photographed. Where live television is called for it helps to have the advice of the television adviser to the President.

3. PROBLEM

In the early morning following a long day of Presidential travel, the President photographs poorly.

SOLUTION

The photo opportunity should come after 9:00 a.m..

4. PROBLEM

Local interviews are done mostly in hotel rooms.

SOLUTION

It's no secret that anyone looks better on tape than film. Because of security and logistics, we never go to the local station for interviews. This is the tail wagging the dog. We should insist that all interviews be done on tape, and try to go to the local station where the sets, number of cameras, lights, audio, etc. will be air quality.

5. PROBLEM

The President is sometimes poorly lit so that his forehead reflects and shadows fall across his shoulders. Sometimes he has a halo look around his head and shadows under his eyes.

SOLUTION

This is primarily the result of being overlit or top-lit. The reflections are a problem when he won't wear make-up. However, the halo and shadows may be avoided by not being lit from directly overhead.

6. PROBLEM

The airport arrival interviews sometimes upstage the entire trip. If the President has no real statement to the press, their questions to him often put him on the defensive. Many times he is asked to comment on something that he is unaware of because of the day's schedule and having just gotten off the plane.

SOLUTION

Do the local television interviews on departure, so that at least he can say what a great city he has visited.

7. PROBLEM

To the viewer, airport arrivals portray an image of a mob scene.

SOLUTION

As has been stated before, the President should be the first one out of Air Force One. No one else should descend the ramp until the President is at the bottom. Also, stage the greeters in front of the press area so that the President has to walk over to them as opposed to staging them at the bottom of the ramp.

8. PROBLEM

Too many great shots have been destroyed by the agents working the line.

SOLUTION

Arrange with Dick Keiser a previously secured photo opportunity and guarantee that his guys will back off when we've got a great shot along the line.

9. PROBLEM

The President looks non-Presidential when he wears hats and jackets presented to him.

SOLUTION

Have him hold up the hat or jacket for the cameras, but never should he put them on.

10. PROBLEM

Current rule of thumb: "Well we've got two hours here, what can we find to do with him."

SOLUTION

This attitude has led to the President attending too many meaningless events. His events should be carefully chosen, and again coordinated with the image-maker to allow for maximum exposure. Few advancement think in terms of the 20 million or so viewers who will see the coverage, and, as a result, too often decisions are made too often to placate the locals at the expense of the press and the President's image.

11. PROBLEM

Another rule of thumb: The more exposure the better. Maximum exposure!

SOLUTION

This problem begs for the overall coordination of marketing of the image. The Nixon people were very good at this. The President has been hurt by over-exposure. The best way to control this is by keeping him in the White House and bringing the media to him, then having him come out at strategic times achieving the desired effect. But, the travel blitz and indiscriminate choosing of things for the President to do has adversely affected his image.

The President's schedule on the road should be coordinated for maximum media effect. We should know after a pre-advance what picture we want to float. We should know the type of story that should float. If we have no picture, we should then depend on a good and newsworthy speech.

12. PROBLEM

The President's travel schedule is not coordinated with his media campaign.

SOLUTION

Many times we go into a city on an advance and see thousands of dollars worth of advertising on television and radio. And we're fighting to get a crowd to meet the President at the airport. With graphics and radio spots, we could coordinate the two efforts. The overall desired goal should be consistent.

V. SUMMARY

The examples listed in this report all lead to one fundamental conclusion: The President needs an image-maker or producer who coordinates the various elements which influence the viewers'

perspective of the candidate so that the end product is an organized attempt at conveying that message that we want to get across. There exists in this Administration a serious need for someone to be constantly thinking in terms of the President's image as it relates to mass media. The thought process and strategy of Presidential travel should be produced for maximum effect. But this will not happen until the organizers of Presidential travel think in the terms that I've outlined. With an organized effort to coordinate the image and control the message, the end result or overall picture of our candidate should bear close resemblance to the picture that we're trying to achieve.

The role of the Press Advance Office should be the on-site coordination of the President's image to ensure that his activities are consistent with the overall idea. The press advancement should be briefed by the image maker as to: 1) the reason for the trip, and, 2) the desired goal to be achieved from the trip or the overall scheme. The press advancement's function then becomes one of coordinating the various elements on the road to achieve the desired goals. The press advancement acts as the producer on the road, sensitive to the problems that directly relate to the President's image. The press advancement must always be thinking in terms of media impact -- deadlines and feed times.

Unfortunately, sometimes decisions are made on the pre-advance or within the White House prior to the advance which lack a sensitivity to using the event in the best manner of promoting the President. In most cases the concerns of the locals and the people in the auditorium take precedent over the needs of the press who have an audience of millions. Presidential trips are not at this point produced for proper media impact. Therefore, by the time the press advancement arrives on the scene, many of the decisions have already been made.

In my estimation, the overriding perspective should be that of the producer or image-maker.

Once established, all advance groups should work to further this perspective and guarantee that it becomes incorporated into all aspects of Presidential travel.