

The Dallas Morning News

September 16, 1984

GRAMM, DOGGETT RELY ON OWN INSTINCTS, FRIENDS SAY

Candidates weigh advice, then act on gut feelings, associates find

By Sam Attlesey

Phil Gramm's risky decision in 1983 to switch parties, resign his seat in Congress and run in a special election was made during a 24-hour period.

He consulted with a couple of his longtime congressional aides; his wife, Wendy; and construction magnate H.B. Zachry. But he primarily relied on "gut instinct," people close to Gramm say.

"It was really his own decision," said Wendy Gramm, the wife of the former Texas A&M professor who now is the Republican Senate nominee.

When Lloyd Doggett started thinking about trading a safe state Senate seat for a long-shot run for the U.S. Senate, he consulted his wife, Libby; longtime friend and Austin lawyer John Scanlon; and a couple of law partners.

But Doggett, too, relied on his political instincts to determine that the time was right for him to further his career.

The two candidates for the U.S. Senate have surrounded themselves with some of the best and brightest political consultants money can buy. But they also rely greatly on an inner circle of friends and family as well as their own instincts.

"Lloyd doesn't really take advice," said campaign chairman James Carville, a Louisiana political consultant. "I don't know if 'loner' is the word, but he pretty much decides on his own. His instincts about himself are good."

"He's not one of the easier people to work for, but there are not many any better," Carville said of Doggett.

Carol Reed, the Dallas County coordinator for Gramm, said she will match her candidate's instincts against anyone's.

"His gut reactions are great," Mrs. Reed said. "You will be in a meeting, and after three hours of discussions, you end up back with his initial reaction."

Gramm will listen to advice but "you better have a good argument with a whole lot of facts and figures to back you up," she said.

Another close Gramm associate said he likes to hear "the downside of things. He's not interested in having 'yes' people."

There was considerable disagreement and anxiety among Gramm's campaign team when he began attacking Doggett for his support of gay rights legislation.

But Gramm, utilizing poll results showing Texans overwhelming support "traditional family values," feels the issue has been an effective one.

Gramm's wife, Wendy, recalls that when Sen. John Tower announced that he would not seek re-election, Gramm "melodramatically called me and said clear the calendar" because the two had to decide whether he would run.

After a brief discussion at the dinner table, Mrs. Gramm said she told him, "Phil, you know you are going to run. You want me to object so we can make a big deal out of this?" Among those people identified as being in Gramm's inner circle are Jim Francis, former campaign manager for former Gov. Bill Clements; Dallas businessman H.R. "Bum" Bright; Gramm's administrative assistant, Ruth Cymber; his press secretary, Larry Neal; and Charles Maurice, a former associate in the economics department at Texas A&M, where Gramm was a professor.

Two longtime friends of Gramm from his Central Texas congressional district also are in the inner circle. Loy Norris, a retired war hero from Burleson, has driven Gramm around the district for years and now is one of his traveling aides. Waco businessman Carey Hobbs is Gramm's pilot.

"They are two people whose opinions count, but they are not involved in heavy-duty campaign strategy. But they have a sense of what works for Phil," one associate said. Gramm's professional staff includes pollster Lance Tarrance of Houston; campaign coordinator Richard McBride of Austin; direct-mail expert Karl Rove of Austin; campaign strategist Charlie Black of Washington; fund-raiser Brad O'Leary of Washington; and media manager Roger Ailes of New York.

The Doggett professional team includes Carville, who has handled numerous local campaigns in Louisiana; pollster Peter Hart of Washington; and the California media firm of Zimmerman, Galanty and Fiman.

The professional advisers are used to make strategic campaign decisions -- what kind of advertisements the campaign will use and where to concentrate a get-out-the-vote effort. The inner circle usually gives advice of a more personal nature, such as whether Doggett is being aggressive enough.

For example, some of Doggett's close friends advised him not to "hold hostage" a bill prolonging the life of the Texas Employment Commission in the last session of the Texas Legislature. They argued that it could be politically harmful. But Doggett said tying up the Employment Commission bill was the only way he could get his fellow legislators to adopt a Texas Human Rights Commission.

Both were approved in a special session of the Legislature.

"You can say everything you want to, and he won't get mad or fire you," said Carville.

"You can speak very candidly, and he will speak very candidly back to you."

Doggett's inner circle includes his wife, Libby; Scanlon, who this summer became campaign manager; law partners Jim Marston and Tommy Jacks; and state Senate aides Nancy Williams and Sally Watkins, who have worked with Doggett since he was elected 11 years ago.

Peck Young, an Austin consultant, is also considered a Doggett adviser.

Mrs. Doggett said state Treasurer Ann Richards and Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower are "longtime friends of ours."

And one Austin Democrat describes Mrs. Doggett, who sits in on strategy meetings, as "the single most influential player with Doggett. She is the force behind the whole deal."