

80.
1976

54 Topeka Capital-Journal
Sunday, August 29, 1976



Tearful moments in Russell were a surprise campaign opener for the senator who threatened to play hardball with Jimmy Carter. Behind Dole on the podium were his mother, Mrs. Bind Dole, Mrs. Olivia Bennett, President Ford and Mrs. Mary Hanford Dole, his wife.

Continued from preceding page

'I don't want 'em to see that I have trouble with my buttocks. . .'

record that pales Carter's and the prospect of adding strength in the farm states — which Ford badly needs.

And there is more to Bob Dole than the acerbic wit of Capitol Hill, the Dark Knight of the Right. For a public man, there is a very private side to Bob Dole, evidenced by his concern for the handicapped, his sudden tears 10 days ago at a barbecue in Russell.

It shows, too, in the half-diffident manner in which he sometimes approaches the voters when he is offstage. Ford's public anointing, and the intensive news exposure which followed, have given him instant recognition now.

"Dole is not a household word," he used to quip, "but it's a four-letter word you can get used to." In the past, it was possible for him to dine quietly in cafes even in Kansas without being particularly noticed. It was then that the style showed.

A tall man, handsome, with a dark and piercing gaze and a face and grace of movement that belie his 53 years, he seems superbly confident and genuinely interested moving from table to table, at a motel restaurant, shaking hands.

And yet, when he returns to his own table, he remarks quietly, "You never know whether people expect you to come over and greet them, or whether they'd rather just be left alone."

This concern contrasts sharply with this man's reputation for savaging his fellows in the endless debates on Capitol Hill. It is richly deserved.

He is a curious fellow, this junior senator from Kansas, at once a loyalist and a maverick. He is a neat, precise conservative who shoots from the hip, a man in love since boyhood with the ideal of public service yet who lives like a hermit crab, doors bolted, shutters drawn.

He is one of the few men closely associated with the Nixon administration whose honor, integrity or motives were never seriously challenged. It is not that he lacks enemies; indeed, Bob Dole is defined more by his enemies than his friends. It is simply that even his enemies find it hard to tar him with the Watergate brush — though he lives in that now-famous house, and has for years.

Before Watergate got quite so explosive, Bob Dole often told a little story about his relations with the White House while he was chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Dole had been trying for days, he said, to reach Richard M. Nixon — without success. Finally H. R. Haldeman, untitled chief of Nixon's "German General Staff," called him at home one evening and said, "I understand you'd like to see the President."

"Yes, I would," Dole replied.

"Fine," said Haldeman. "Time in Channel 9 at 6:30 tonight."

New boys in the Senate are like new boys everywhere. Their elders expect them to be seen and not heard. But Dole, little known with no friends, no organization, no money and no influence, flouted Washington tradition and rapidly emerged as one of the Republicans' most eloquent and effective speakers within two years after winning his post in 1968.

Dole is a man of strong convictions and short fuse; a combination that soon had him conducting a spirited — if unsolicited — defense of the administration's Vietnam policy on the Senate floor. He still believes in "My country, right or wrong," and he quickly tired of the unchallenged Democrat litany that the U.S. was wrong to continue the war. To Dole, the enemy is still the enemy. Like the late Knute Rockne, he firmly believes the best defense is a good offense, and his razor tongue and instinct for the jugular quickly attracted Nixon's attention.

Nixon was by no means alone. Sen. Barry M. Goldwater, R-Ariz., exulted in 1970 that "Dole's my man now. He's the first man we've had around here in a long time who'll grab the other side by the hair and drag them down the hill."

Nixon, who needed an effective proxy voice in the Senate, appreciated Dole's view, his mastery of the one-line put-down and doubtless also the fact that the two men were much alike in several ways. Both are essentially loners, both are deep-dyed conservatives. Neither apparently feels much need for close friendships. Neither is comfortable in a social milieu.

There was nobody too big for Dole to tackle: In July, 1970, Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., let it be known that his Foreign Relations Committee would introduce an amendment to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which had been used by the Johnson administration to

justify massive U.S. intervention in Vietnam and inherited by Nixon.

It was a shock, then, when Dole — the stalwart warhawk — suddenly introduced his own surprise amendment to do the same thing. It brought chuckles from other legislative tacticians, and a howl from Fulbright. When the latter complained that Dole had "stolen my cow," Dole shot back, "No, we just milked it a little. It's National Dairy Month, and I'd never steal a man's cow during National Dairy Month."

It was probably the Kansan's cleverest and most original move during his first Senate term, for he is not a strategist nor a fount of new legislation, but rather a defender of the status quo. He is a clever and witty tactician whose actions spring from deep traditionalist values, comfortable and seldom questioned. Effective on either offense or defense as the Senate's Fast Gun from the Middle West, he seeks not to change the world, but to preserve it. In the case of the resolution, he knew it had already served its purpose and was no longer needed.

Thus, too, he played a key role in exposing grain manipulator Billie Sol Estes while in the House, but most of his eight years' legislative effort there was aimed at protecting such Kansas special interests as farmers and oilmen.



Dole's dramatic 1974 re-election made him a power in the Senate and placed him on the important Agriculture, Finance and Budget committees. His voting record and public statements placed him alongside Goldwater and Reagan as a right-winger, counterbalancing such men as Jacob Javits and Nelson Rockefeller of New York and Edward Brooke of Massachusetts.

He liked it fine. Recalling the late Everett Dirksen's career in the Senate, Dole noted the Illinois spellbinder "only had 33 Republicans part of that time, but he had a great deal of power. I hope people don't misconstrue power. I wish I had more of it. Proper political influence is not bad. Getting things done for your state is not bad. As long as you don't deprive somebody else or take it away from someone within your state and give it to some other 'special interest' group. People expect you to do something aside from put out a newsletter, I think."

And there speaks Bob Dole the workaholic: a man so wrapped up in duty and his concept of service that he has virtually no outside interests, whose intense drive and narrow concentration finally led in 1972 to the end of his 22-year marriage to Phyllis Holden Dole. Mrs. Dole, now Mrs. Lon Buzick of Sylvan Grove (40 miles from Russell) said last week that she had no bad memories of those years — but no "extra-good ones, either."

That drive has been with him all his life, say family and childhood friends.

Born and reared in Russell, then a town of some 3,000 in west central Kansas, he was the second of four children of working parents. "We never had any money, and we all worked, my sisters and my brother and myself."

Six-foot-two white still in high school, Dole was intensely drawn to athletics and to competition, participating in football, track and basketball. The last was his favorite. A man who knew him as a youth recalls that at the University of Kansas "he made Phog Allen's basketball team, and he really wasn't that good; it was just by sheer determination. He did everything with the utmost effort he could give it. He was a good competitor."

World War II sidetracked Dole's boyhood ambitions to become a doctor. One semester into KU, he and a close childhood friend decided to enlist in the Army Air Force. The friend was accepted and never came home. Dole was rejected for partial color blindness and sent to the infantry instead.

He passed swiftly through Officer Candidate School, and, a first lieutenant, was leading a platoon across Italy's Po Valley one April morning in 1945 when his unit came under fire. Personally leading a squad attack against a German machine gun nest, he lost two men to mortar fire. His radioman was cut down and Dole dragged the wounded man to safety under heavy fire.

Dole then left a shell hole to get close enough to toss a hand grenade at the Germans. He was hit by both the machine gun and by mortar fragments and blown back into a shell hole. Paralyzed, he lay for hours before medics found him. The action earned him the Bronze Star, a promotion to captain — and a cast from ears to hips. He lost a kidney, later suffered blood clots in the lungs that made him a guinea pig for streptomycin. He was barely 21.

He spent 39 months in hospitals in Italy, Africa, Florida, Kansas and finally Battle Creek, Mich., fighting first for his life and then for the use of his limbs. In Battle Creek's Percy Jones General Hospital, he shared a physical therapy ward with two other combat casualties likewise destined to become U.S. senators — Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii and Philip S. Hart of Michigan. There, too, he met Phyllis, a Concord, N.H., physical therapist whom he married in 1948.

Despite a series of bone and muscle transplants, Dole still has only minimal use of his right hand. It is his only real handicap, which he habitually disguises by carrying a rolled-up newspaper — "forcing" him to extend his left to shake.

Dole seldom speaks of his war record, and almost never of his injuries. Yet they have shaped the course of his life since. An athlete no longer able to compete, he buried himself in his work. Today he routinely pursues a grinding 14- to 16-hour daily schedule that leaves younger, fitter aides exhausted. A pre-med student no longer able to help the sick, he switched to law — and learned to use his tongue like a scalpel. But it has never ceased to grate upon Bob Dole that he can do with difficulty or not at all many things that most persons do easily and without thought.

"He never gave up on the use of his arm," says his sister, Norma Jean. "Everything he could pick up off the ground, he would lift, constantly. He used to carry a rubber ball and work with it, all the time. He uses (the hand) for as many things as he knows he can." She recalls, "He'd get discouraged with himself when he'd try to do things, because he expected results much quicker than they came. Tying his shoes was an awful big battle for him." Cutting his foot, tying his tie, dressing and undressing remain a daily struggle today — and he still refuses help. The handicap is at the root of his passion for privacy.

"When I'm through, I like to be through. I like to come in my room, take off my tie and my shirt and that's it. That's all for the day. And I don't like people around watching when

'Dole is not a household word, but it's a four-letter word you can get used to.'

I'm dressing. I don't dress myself very quickly anyway," he says hesitantly, "and it's when I just want to be alone. I don't want 'em to see that I have trouble with my buttocks and those things. . . I don't. I don't want people to see those things. . ."

He graduated with honors from Washburn University School of Law in Topeka and was elected to the Kansas Legislature in 1950, two years after he was finally discharged from the Army.

"Some people I assume would fault me; in fact, I've heard it said critically. Well, Bob Dole has never done anything but be on the public payroll, and as a matter of fact, it's probably true.

"I got out of the service — I was on the payroll then; nobody complained about that — and I was in the hospital for 39 months and nobody complained about that. I did. And I went from there to law school on the G.I. Bill which in effect was public payroll, and I went from there to the county attorney's office, and every month I'd get my county attorney's check and I'd get my retirement check from the Army so my income was still public. . . I made some money in private law practice, but I went to Congress.

"As I have said in my disclosure statements, I don't have any oil and gas interests, no stocks, no bonds, no secretly held income-producing property, so I think it's probably a fair charge. But I think the other side of the coin is, there are many opportunities for people in politics to make a fast buck," and some do, he indicated.

Dole's disclosure statement in 1974 showed total assets of some \$85,000 down to and including his personal car. Much of it represented his equity in his Watergate apartment. His residence there is a curious coincidence, as is the fact that, seated at his desk in the Senate Office Building, his next-door neighbor on the right is Sen. George McGovern.

Despite his domicile and his past party post, the final report of the Select Committee on

Presidential Campaign Activities (true name of the "Senate Watergate Committee") concluded "it has received no evidence suggesting any complicity in wrongdoing" by either party committee or their principal officers during the 1972 campaign.

And Sen. Lowell Weicker, outspoken Connecticut Republican member of that committee, then remarked, "If you suggested a Liddy-type operation around Bob, Bob'd kick you out of

'He (Carter) better get ready because . . . we're going to play hardball pretty soon. . .'

the damn' window. I mean, I know Bob. He would've been just as blunt in his opposition to that as he was in supporting the President on Vietnam and other measures."

Referring to Dole's stint as chairman, Weicker said, "They were ignoring Bob Dole . . . during the whole bloody mess, when they just kept on going around him and around him and around him. Probably the best damn thing that ever happened to Bob Dole was to be able to point to that later."

In fact, Nixon's key advisors appear never to have had much trust in the irreverent Kansan. The problem was to use him and still keep him at a distance.

"I remember after my first or second year there a suggestion from the President that 'You're the kind of a guy we need up there to stand up' — he didn't use the word 'guts' or 'backbone,' but something like that — and he wanted me to be in a position of leadership. "That didn't offend me, because I agreed with his Vietnam policy, and that's what all the fuss was about. So, I think that probably resulted in the chairmanship, though that was a very iffy thing."

"It almost fell apart at 2 a.m. the morning it happened, because Mitchell and Haldeman questioned my loyalty. There's never been any public information on it, but at the last minute, when almost everybody was speculating, 'Dole To Be Named Chairman,' at 6 o'clock that night, I got a call from Haldeman, from California, saying, 'Bob, it's all off.' That 'There's some question about your loyalty to the President.' And it was off and on again like that till about 2 in the morning.

"I was madder'n hell. I demanded to talk to the President, which I couldn't do. I said, 'I don't believe this is the President's view.' I had this very strong feeling that Haldeman and Mitchell had decided that, 'Bob Dole probably isn't the guy we want. He's not gonna be totally subservient. . ."

Dole routed presidential advisor Bryce Harlow out of bed to act as intermediary in the long-distance fireworks. "It was raining that night, and he came down to the RNC at 11 o'clock at night, got Mitchell on the phone, and back and forth, and finally as a compromise, they wanted to bring in a fellow named Tom Evans — they did bring him in — as a quote 'co-chairman,' and I wouldn't agree to that."

Stabbing sharply at the table with his good left hand, Dole recounted how "I said, 'I'm either gonna be the chairman or he's gonna be the chairman,' and how the issue was finally resolved by creating a triad with Dole chairman and Evans, a national committeeman from Delaware, and Mrs. Anne Armstrong, committeewoman from Texas, as co-chairman a rung below.

Dole understood the political rationale that required the formation of the separate Committee to Re-elect the President, but eventually he found himself lashing out at that organization, too. "Election night, for example, the party was never mentioned," Dole recalls. "We were all there, but we were never mentioned. The President mentioned the Committee to Re-elect, and all the great work that they had done."

"There wasn't a Republican sign in the room, and I expressed my distress and disgust publicly that night, because there hadn't been enough attention paid to Republican candidates, and too much paid to the President. I mean, I wanted him re-elected, but it wasn't necessary to spend \$40 million to do it," he summarized.

Such remarks didn't go unnoticed. Dole had intended to stay on as chairman until the late spring of 1973, and to try to "run the committee without the Committee to Re-elect and all the other people from the White House. I knew they could've cared less how Nixon was re-elected and the Haldemans and others really didn't care about the future of the Republican party, so I wouldn't have these restraints and the chairman would be the chairman."

He called Mitchell and Haldeman after the election and told them he was ready to discuss the national committee any time. "Haldeman said, 'Well, we're not worried about that now,' but two weeks later he called me; said, 'The President wants to see you.'"

"So I went to Camp David, saw the President and got a Camp David jacket and all that stuff." Including, he says, a rope with a noose in it.

"I told the President when I left at that visit, 'Well, now, Mr. President, before I get back on that helicopter, somebody's gonna leak a story that Bob Dole's been pushed out as chairman.' He said, 'Ahhh, there's no chance of that. That isn't true.' He said, 'You go back, take some soundings in Kansas, you think it over, and we'll get together again and decide when it's best for you to leave.'"

"He (Nixon) said, 'I personally think — and I think he was right — you know, the best time to leave is right after the inaugural. It's over, you're on top, you don't have to worry about the Committee, the President's been re-inaugurated, you ride in the parade, and . . . whoooooitt . . . you know.' And that made a lot of sense."

Two days later the Washington Post carried a story headlined, "Dole Leaves As Chairman," climaxing a series of rumors "that I was about to get the ax. I had two choices, either gracefully resigning or standing up before the Republican National Committee in late January and saying, 'I have no intention of resigning,' and see what they did. I think they would've stayed with me. But I didn't. I accepted it, told 'em I would quit."

It was a lucky decision. Within three months, Dole's successor, former U.N. Ambassador George Bush, was caught up in the unraveling Watergate scandal. Even the circumstances helped. "It was obvious that the fine hand of Bob Haldeman was pushing me over the cliff at Camp David," Dole said. "And I think I said as much at the time."

A political realist, Dole once said, "I think there's still a lot out there other than politics. The world's gonna go on whether Bob Dole wins or loses and Kansas is gonna go on. I think it'd be a different philosophical bent, but if that's what the people decide, then that's their decision."

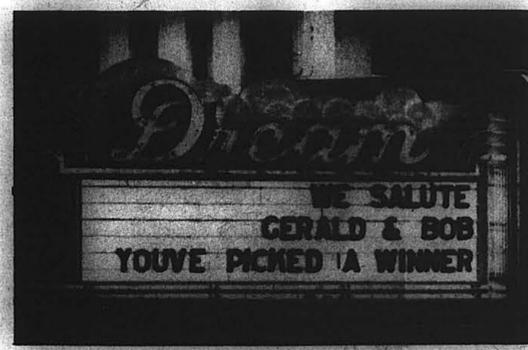
It's not likely he's changed in the last two years. He knows the Ford-Dole ticket is starting well behind in the polls. He did not accept Ford's invitation blindly. But Dole has a strong sense of imperatives, and he feels very strongly that someone must stop the country's 40-year trend to socialism. He still does not intend to lose.

"If I can emerge from the aftermath of Watergate, I don't know what'll happen," observed Dole during his 1974 campaign. "I think anybody who says they don't want to go higher in anything probably isn't leveling. But I think you dream about those things; you don't ever think they're going to happen."

He estimated there were perhaps eight or 10 senators who "really have in mind the White House," and 10 or 15 more modest who consider themselves good vice-presidential timber, plus some others with no visible aspirations.

"Kansas is a small state; I'm not the best-known senator in the U.S. Senate," he said realistically. "So you just keep working and hope you might do something."

If Bob Dole has his way, it's going to be a rainy night in Georgia. (M)



Staff photos by Dave Johnson, Jim Richardson

'I think anybody who says they don't want to go any higher in anything probably isn't leveling'