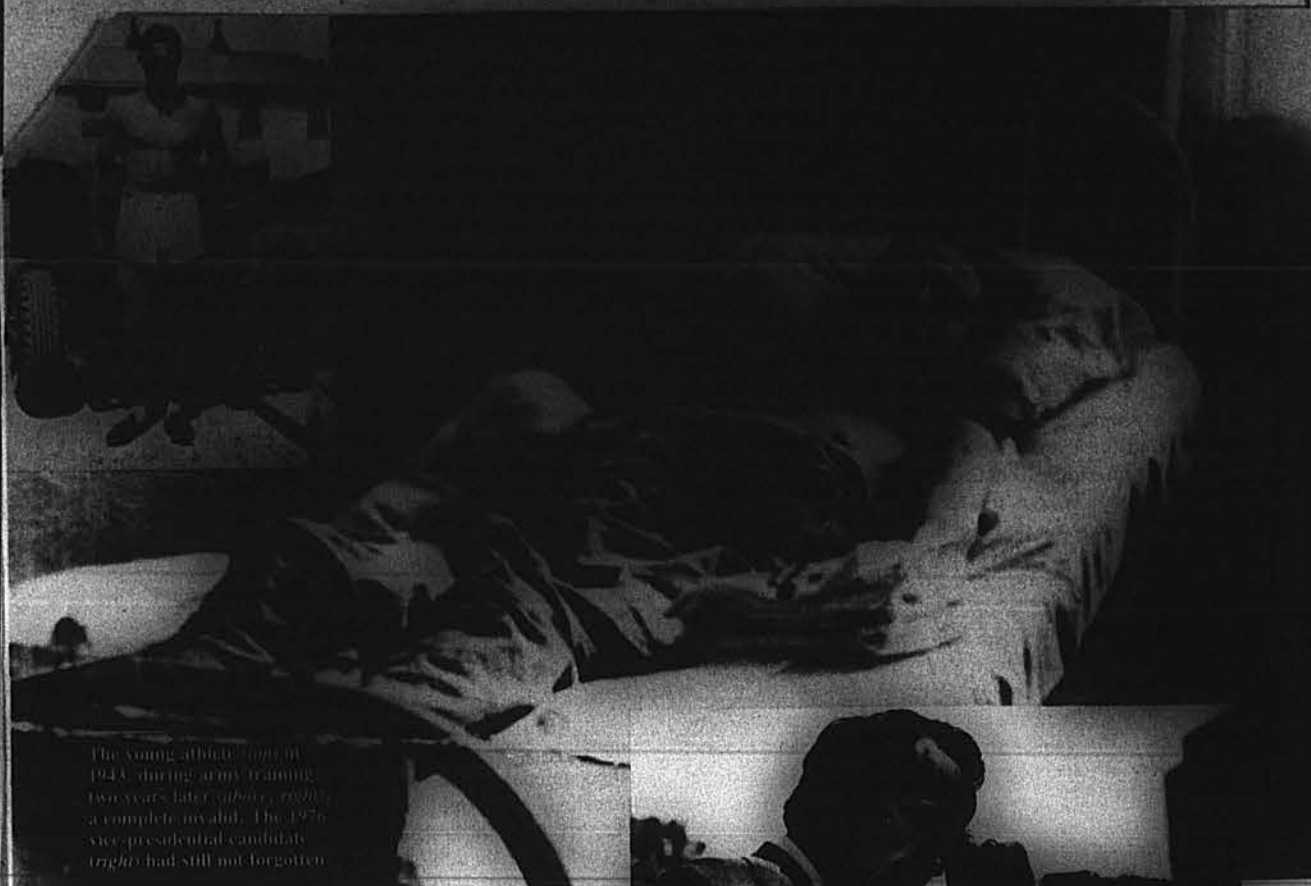


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The young Dole in 1943, during army training, a complete invalid. The 1970 vice-presidential candidate (right) had still not forgotten

"You go through the period of self-pity," he told me.

I asked him if there was anger.

"Yeah," he said quietly. "There you are, a grown man, and you can't do anything, can't get dressed. I couldn't feed myself for a year..." His voice trailed off into the ether of memory. Gratefully, he has forgotten exactly how long it took to make each step, but he admits it was an inch a day. Or less.

After languishing for six months in the V.A. hospital without rehabilitation or exercise, Dole got himself transferred to an army hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan. Doctors found his shoulder still paralyzed and deep injuries in his spine; but worse, the muscles of both upper arms had been allowed to atrophy grotesquely. His right hand was crabbed, and his left nearly as useless. Active exercises were ordered immediately. Doctors shook their heads. They did not expect Lieutenant Dole to live.

Blood clots developed in his lungs. Month after month he lay on his back, through the bleak winter days and then the nights, his mind jumping around, listening for the howl of the train whistle and the brief, tantalizing sound of mo-



tion. Not until March of 1946 was he permitted up in a chair for short periods. And the next time he looked, another year had passed.

"You think nobody could have it worse than you, why did God do it to me, I didn't do anything, it's unfair," he recalled. "I'm never going to get married, never going to amount to anything. Live off a pension. Selling pencils on the street corner." There were times he'd throw things. But precisely because the survivor does not die or give up, the self with its wanton appetite for life comes upon its true innocence.

"You change the way you measure everything," as Dole described the turning point to me. "Life becomes about learning how to use what you have left."

Kenny Dole remembers indelibly the statement his brother made in the hospital. He said he figured he'd lost ten years of his life; he swore he was going to make it up.

can't stand to be alone.

"And he's still trying to make it up," Kenny told me, startling himself as the revelation popped out.

"He's a man in a hurry," I said.

"It's true."

Young Dole started running around to doctors, in search of the magic operation. An immigrant Armenian surgeon by the name of Kelikian agreed to work on Dole for nothing. Still, there were other costs. So a cigar box was set up at the V.F.W. post in Russell, and the townspeople gave whatever they could. He endured three operations, believing each time that the next one would restore his shoulder. "You go through this dream period," he told me, "where you know it's going to be just like it was."

I asked the senator how much his disability had delayed him in starting his career. "I'm not certain I had a career before this happened," he replied. "Would I have gone back to school? Maybe not. My grades weren't all that good." He made a C average in high school. "This bad time actually gave me a new start."

He didn't mention his first wife. When I asked if she hadn't been instrumental in his new start, he seemed to resist the memory of dependence, and merely acknowledged that she was "helpful."

I COULD SEE DOLE'S FIRST WIFE from the door of her widow's condo in Topeka. She had a cigarette going and she was planning folk art for Kansas Day. At the bell, she primped the gray hair piled like scissor-curved ribbons on her head.

Warm and chatty as a small-town switchboard operator,

Elizabeth, newly svelte,

Phyllis Holden Dole Buzick told me she first saw the young Dole in the mess hall at the Battle Creek hospital. He was *not* a patient of hers. She was an occupational therapist on the psychiatric ward. "That poor Bob Dole, he has not long to live," somebody said. Such a nice-looking man, Phyllis thought, it was sad.

"I had him, probably within days, at a dance up at the officers' club," she says. When he asked her to dance, she knew to stay close so it wouldn't hurt his arm to pull. Having worked with so many shattered men, she didn't even consider Bob Dole handicapped.

Three months from the day they met, Bob married Phyllis. Shortly thereafter he was released with a "total and permanent disability," and enrolled at the University of Arizona. Phyllis went to class with Bob and took notes for him. She had to sign his checks as well. Even his good hand had no abductor and adductor control. He would have to learn to write all over again, as if holding chopsticks. Frustrated, he started running again.

Sometimes he would fall. Pick himself up, fall again, pick himself up. "I learned very quickly," says Phyllis, "you don't help him unless he asks you."



The youthful girl and the future senator. Bob Dole with first wife Phyllis, shown in 1946.



has switched to a younger, looser hairstyle.

Running one day he was stopped by a pain he knew like an old friend. He'd shaken a blood clot loose. So it was back to Topeka, where he could have his blood checked weekly, and there he ran double time through his bachelor's and law degrees at Washburn University. He dragged a primitive recorder, bigger than a bread box, to every class. "Sitting there by the hour at night transcribing notes from that silly thing must have been tremendous practice for him," muses Phyllis. "I had to hide in the corner because he didn't want any noise."

Now that his body had turned incontrovertibly against him, he had a new instrument to train: his mind. Phyllis can still see him pacing the rug while she quizzed him in German. "Bob, why do you have to get an A?" she confronted him one day. "Why can't a C be good enough?"

He whirled with a vehemence that scared her. "You tell me how to study a C or a B's worth and I will," she remembers him saying. "I can only study until I get it."

Even as he was racking up A's in law school, he ran for the Kansas legislature and served a term. And no sooner had he started his first job, working for "Doc" Eric Smith, an oil-and-gas lawyer in Russell, than he had Doc out campaigning with him. Dole was elected county prosecutor for four straight terms, augmenting his county caseload with a full private practice and tireless campaigning for the Republican Party.

"He worked harder than any man I've ever known when he was county attorney," says his Aunt Gladys. The Doles produced only one child, a daughter, and Dole found time to take her to the local Methodist church each Sunday. But apart from that meager family recreation, Phyllis can vouch that his breakneck pace continued—every night until ten, every weekend—throughout their marriage.

I APPROACHED MY FIRST INTERVIEW with Bob Dole having just written a book about survivors. My conclusion was that those who face and master the trauma may become almost immunized against the ill effects of future life accidents and emerge as the most successful and resilient adults. It helps if one was raised to tough it out. Bob Dole agreed, though with characteristic brevity boiled it down to "strength through adversity."

The winner against adversity emerges with what I think of as the victorious personality. Bob Dole has most of the hallmarks: the self-trust, the sense of humor, the perspective to understand that his plight is not unique. Tested again and again, a survivor develops the strength and self-directedness necessary to fix his sights and chart a course without depending on outside forces—indeed, often in spite of them.

Why did he choose to go into politics, for instance? "The one thing he really regretted about the injury, he told me, was he would no longer be able to participate in competitive sports," offers his former wife. "My feeling is that he channeled that drive to compete into politics." His brother, Kenny, agrees.

Yes, but why choose a profession based on glad-handing when you start with one arm tied behind your back? I speculated that perhaps the way Bob Dole defied his disability was to choose the hardest possible professional road.

"You just might have hit it on the head," chuckled Russ Townsley from Russell, the town's iconoclastic newspaper publisher. But then, Bob Dole never did talk about what he feels most deeply. Russ and his wife spent many social evenings with their neighbors Phyllis and Bob during the early career years. The two men would sit in the living room reading their newspapers.

"So," Bob might say.

"So," Russ would reply.

"Bob was in too much of a hurry to waste time chitchatting," says Townsley.

Few would dispute that Dole today is the fastest runner on the Hill in seizing a political opportunity and exploiting it. Survivors of extremity must return to their creature nature and rely on it to fight their way back, acting and moving much of the time by instinct. Dole doesn't have to wait and poll a dozen friends and advisers before he knows what move to take. He has the sure, silent instincts of a prairie lion.

In Washington, he again hit the ground running—for four terms in the House, then as "sheriff" of the Senate to curry favor with Nixon, then for leader of his party, then for leader of the Senate, and now for leader of the nation. More than ever, at the age of sixty-three, Bob Dole is a man in a hurry.

DOLE STILL HAS A DARK SIDE. He must struggle always not to surrender to the anger, not to slip down into the well of self-pity that waits just beneath sleep.

It is not always easy to be a nice guy when one has to stop and work for fifteen minutes just to button one's shirt. Retested every day, in the physical mantra he must perform to dress, Dole steps out into the world hungry for action. "You'll find more decisions around Bob Dole than almost anyone else in public life," notes Senator David Durenberger.

It drives him crazy, almost, when the me-tooers line up to offer amendments in the newly telegraphic Senate while Bob Dole is endeavoring to make a deal. The 1986 tax-reform bill was a prime example. Tempers were frayed after the second midnight session. Shouts erupted in the Republican cloakroom. "Let's stay here all night and shut 'em up!" hollered one side. The others wanted their moment. Suddenly Dole backed off and defused it all. He suggested that they break up the night into time zones. "Let's see, we'll put the senator from Alaska on at one A.M.—that's prime time where he's from." He let everybody blow off steam and then made it clear he had a plan. "I have to keep in mind I'm the leader," Dole says. "If I start screaming and kicking, you might as well not have a leader."

His wit is described as "sharp," "biting," "cutting," "slashing"—all combative words. His slingshot tongue de-

Dole still has a dark side.

fends him against the old feeling of helplessness. In one of his mordant moments, Dole reportedly quipped that he might vote for Pat Robertson if the evangelist could bring his arm back. He can savage more political peacocks in fewer words than anyone in public life. Here is Bob Dole at the closed Gridiron Club Dinner in 1983:

"I told John Glenn it wasn't fair for him to take advantage of his hero status as an astronaut. I mentioned this to him at the unveiling of the portrait... showing me invading Italy." A touch of bitterness?

He knocked off three past presidents in one blow:

"History buffs probably noted the reunion at Sadat's funeral a few weeks ago of three ex-presidents: Carter, Ford, and Nixon—See No Evil... Hear No Evil... and Evil."

Then he wiped the floor with his presidential rivals:

"And my good friend George Bush can't win... He's the only one here tonight who will have to show an ID card to get out."

"Yes, there's Jack Kemp... Even as a kid, Jack wanted to play quarterback... because he's the only one on the field who gets to talk all the time."

It has been said that a funny man is an angry man. While Dole can swallow a rival in one bite of sarcasm, the aftertaste it leaves with voters can be sour. "I can hear him today," says his former wife, "and know it isn't funny, it's a dig."

Dole knows it. "I have to watch my tongue," he told me.

And more and more he does. Well, except with certain people. His frequent needling of Bush is not without class resentment. A quip his political director won't confirm or deny: "Bush is the kind of guy who screws with his socks on." And there are other exceptions, like Jack Kemp. Dole, a skinflint with words, sees Kemp as a profligate pretty-boy who deflates the value of ideas every time he opens his mouth. The two made a pact some time ago to be civilized. But when, early in the Iran-contra debacle, Kemp's press secretary charged Dole with making Brownie points on Reagan's corpse, Dole fired back an ultimatum: "You start up with the press again and I'll let you have it."

Given his pragmatic political style, Dole may be the right man for the times. As the world becomes increasingly threatening and irrational, and as it becomes harder to be reverent toward anything or anybody, Dole's lightly cynical, deadpan humor offers a refreshing detachment. He would be a smash on *Saturday Night Live*. And in a society increasingly short on shared norms and splintered by interest groups, a master compromiser who can play pick-up-sticks with his eyes closed could be a comfort. But there is no real evidence that the anger beneath Dole's jagged-edged humor has been stilled. It may be a ticking bomb that could explode under the pressure of the coming campaign.

When I asked his political colleagues to name Dole's most distinguishing feature, most often mentioned was his brightness. "I think Dole has the best mind in the U.S. Senate since

Jacob Javits," says Bush's former press secretary Pete Teelley, who once did a campaign plan for Dole. "But he's not perceived as intellectual, because of his keen wit." People mistakenly associate a ready wit with being superficial, lightweight. In fact, humor is the most intellectual of defense mechanisms. It is a barrier against feelings that the ego dare not let escape.

Dole's intelligence isn't book-learned. It's intuitive and selective. Senator Simpson swears Dole has a four-track mind. A clutch of his colleagues will be buzzing on the floor while Dole's eyes are fixed in the middle distance—nobody thinks he's even listening. "You go back to the chambers with him and damned if he didn't hear everything in his range," says Simpson. "His responses come so quickly, he must have a special endocrine in his head."

The private engine that drives this master deal-maker is another source of wonder to those who know about his disability. "He won't quit," says his former chief of staff, Rod DeArment, not until he gets the deal done. Constantly munching on junk food as his fuel, he takes giant strides between his two offices. Everyone who has seen him campaign says that when the rest stall, Dole's engine restarts.

DOES HE HAVE COMPASSION? I wondered. Moments of vulnerability?

His divorce was brutal. He walked into the house one night after twenty-three years of marriage—during the last year of which he and Phyllis had broken bread together twice, on Easter and Christmas—and he said, "I want out." That was it. She got no child support.

Phyllis didn't argue or confront. "You don't do that with Bob Dole," she warns. But today she says of her former husband, "He has a lot more feeling inside than he ever will let anybody know." His best male friend, Robert Ellsworth, a former NATO ambassador and Nixon's 1968 political director, explains: "Men from the high plains of Kansas can't express feelings, especially not love for each other. We're a little bit afraid of that." But Ellsworth's feeling for Dole runs deep, that is palpable, and like the few others who have been allowed close to Dole, he insists this is a warm and unusually sensitive man. He volunteered several vulnerable moments.

When they came to Washington as freshman members of the House, in 1961, and were put up the first night at a motel, Dole knocked on Ellsworth's door. He shuffled a bit before he had to ask Ellsworth to button his top button. When he looked up, his face spoke volumes of vulnerability.

And one day in 1973 he said, gruffly, "I'm seeing a lot of this girl."

"So," said Ellsworth.

"I just wanted you to know about it," said Dole.

That was it; he never talked about how he felt.

The "girl" was Elizabeth Hanford, thirty-six. She was the brainy brunette who had been sitting in his office one day to talk about... what was it? Anyway, he wrote her name on his blotter because she was awful pretty.

He was far more cautious this time—three calls before a