

237. 1987

Doleing along together

Continued from preceding page

"a kernel of truth" in the reports of struggle within the burgeoning Dole organization. "What it was, this campaign is still in spring training. We aren't ready to go north," he summed up. "It's all history now. It was nothing more than spring training. It's all normal."

Indeed, it seems likely growing pains are normal for any national candidate effort. As Clinkenbeard remarked, "You're talkin' about puttin' together a \$27 million corporation with 30-some outlets, maybe 50, and then tearing it down 18 months later."

The DFPEC started moving into its rented suite on the eighth floor of an office building above a clothing store at 1828 "L" Street (the same quarters used by the luckless Ford-Dole ticket of 1976) on March 2, and a month later, much already had happened.

Most of the key full-time people were on board: Ellsworth, fund raiser Howard Wilkins, management consultant Don Sloan, political director Bill Lacy, policy consultant Don Devine, Clinkenbeard, comptroller Jim Hagen, chief counsel Scott Morgan. All were experienced. The downtown D.C. staff, counting volunteers, probably stood at 50 plus, and half a dozen young organizers among them already had volunteer workers in place in all 50 states.

And Clinkenbeard reported, "Dole seems to be drawing very well. He's raised \$60,000 in 20 days and he hasn't had to do one event! It's people politics. And it's working," he bubbled, adding, "\$21,000 is comin' in this afternoon. It's really goin' great!"

Dole will have "a great low donor base," predicted the blond young CPA. "Ronald Reagan in '80 had the least number of thousand-dollar donors. (John) Connally (of Texas) and (Sen. George) Bush had the most. If you go out and have all thousand-dollar donors, I don't think you're gonna win this."

Noting the DFPEC already had qualified for federal matching funds (by raising \$5,000 in contributions of \$250 or less in 25 states) the day before formal announcement of its creation, Clinkenbeard continued, "We now have three full-time professional fund raisers on board," working under him, and by the end of April, "we'll have an additional two."

Their task is to raise the \$27 million maximum set by the Federal Election Commission for the primary campaign. "If we raise it, we'll spend it," predicted the 28-year-old veteran of 13 years' campaigning for Dole. "I estimate it's going to be just Bush and Dole who have any chance of raising the full amount," although "Jack Kemp might."

"It takes \$6 to \$8 million just to start off in this game," he explained. That much must be raised by December 1987. "Six to eight million, you're an active player, and anything over that, you're an active candidate in the east." And he added, "With the moving up of 50-some primaries and caucuses, delegates are selected as of the first week of March. That means you have to raise your money earlier now. It used to be you figured on spending 35 percent early, 65 percent in the year of the election. That's now reversed."

Discussing the fact that the Dole organization already has enough checks in hand to meet the federal matching fund standards, Ellsworth pointed out, "As far as I know, we're the only campaign that's achieved that."

Dole, of course, is not yet a declared presidential candidate. Kemp, a congressman from New York and former pro football star, announced Monday. Former Gov. Pete du Pont of Delaware and former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr., had announced earlier.

There are advantages to being an undeclared candidate — as Vice President George Bush probably would agree. For one thing, it provides the flexibility to change one's mind with minimum embarrassment if the going proves too tough — or if other opportunities surface, as happened recently to Tennessee's former Sen. Howard Baker. But there are disadvantages, too, and Clinkenbeard pointed out, "If we keep delaying the announcement too long, it will hurt the fund raising."

Dole and Bush are widely considered the Republican front runners, though former Sen. Paul Laxalt of Nevada and the Rev. Pat Robertson also are expected to run. Bush and Dole are both World War II veterans in their 60s, and '87-'88 likely will be the last national campaign for the loser.

Of the two, Bush is considered the leading contender — in part because as Vice President he's already literally only a heartbeat away from the Oval Office. But Dole is a heavyweight, too. The days are long past when Bob Dole handed out Hawaiian pineapple juice so voters would remember his name.

Lunching in the Capitol's Senate dining room with Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., Ellsworth introduced Pressler as "the very first senator to come to the Dole campaign and say he wanted to help. The first contribution, after Kansas, came from South Dakota." Pressler agreed; said he has worked with Dole for 13 years and is eager to work out a Dole visit to his state this summer.

Pressler described the Kansas senior senator as "ahead in Iowa and South Dakota" and predicted he will win in New Hampshire. Then he added, pragmatically, "It's a tough struggle. Bush will be the front runner to the convention, I don't care what anybody says. But Dole can win."

Discussing the campaign's strategy to assure that, Ellsworth later said, "The first real thing that happens is the Iowa caucus in February '88, and that's followed immediately by the South Dakota and New Hampshire primaries."

"Then on March 3 comes something that we call 'Super Tuesday.' In '84, Mondale and Hart had a big fight over it. In '84, it was seven-southern states. This time, it's 15 or 16 states, and it's nationwide. It includes Washington, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, Maryland, Missouri and the southern states."

Then there are a couple of important primaries — Ohio and Illinois — then some western states,



Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., right, met with Ellsworth to discuss a Dole visit to Pressler's home state. The Dakotas was the first senator to come to the Dole campaign and volunteer his help.



Mike Glassner, a 23-year-old Peabody native, is Dole's aide on out-of-town trips.

concluding with California on the first Tuesday in June, and then the convention in August.

"There are a couple of very important factors: With a schedule like that, we have to have enough money to carry us through. Super Tuesday is going to be a great consumer of money. And not only money, but money at the right time. Workers in the various states, he said, want to be assured the money will be available."

Next, he said, there must be "trust and confidence" between a candidate and his political workers. "Margaret (Ford, his special assistant) and I have just been going over lists of 3,000 people over the country in all walks of life who have indicated in writing that they support Dole for president to some degree." These, continued Ellsworth, include everyone from business tycoons to major ball club owners to small businessmen in Washington to workers in Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

"We've got to win in Iowa and New Hampshire on Super Tuesday," said Ellsworth. "The farm economy is a very big element in the state" in most of those first state votes. "They're all Republican primaries, and Dole is very well known. Trusted. They all know him from his work on the RNC, from past campaigns."

As for Bush, he continued, shrugging, "Bush is there. He's got Air Force One. He's the Vice President." All that, he implies, leaves Bob Dole the underdog in the coming contest.

But that, says Brian Berry, a tall, lanky, red-haired young organizer from Maryland, only means "you've gotta work smart. You go on the road and meet the key leaders personally," spend the rest of the time on the telephone (both much less costly and more efficient). "Bob Dole can win in November — and this is a powerful motivation for people to get in and help," he declared.

Berry is responsible for D.C., where he has been active for the last year, and for an arc of seven populous states from Michigan through New York and back to Ohio. He's now identifying Dole supporters in those states and building volunteer networks for the coming contest.

Typically, he is an old hand at this. A Spanish-speaker, Berry organized Maryland Hispanics for the RNC in 1980-81; served as news secretary for several races in '82 and finished in Michigan, working for Republican senatorial candidate Phil Ruppe. He was working for an advertising agency in March '86, when he was asked to become the first regional representative for Campaign America — Dole's multi-candidate political action committee.

"I said, 'Yes, indeed.' I felt rather honored to be working for the majority leader."

Berry is not alone. Clinkenbeard remarked, "I've always said this: that I was very happy to be working for him rather than some of his senate colleagues." And Kate Rentscher, an Ohioan who has worked for Dole for the last three years, declared, "I've been a Sen. Dole fan for years. I was just fortunate to be in the right place at the right time."

Most of the DFPEC staffers are either single or married without children. Luckily. Nearly all of them are working 12-hour days, and many spend half their weekends in these bare offices, as well.

As 29-year-old Chief Counsel Scott Morgan remarked, "I figure it's gonna get worse. Workin' long hours for less pay — I can't beat the deal. It's fun seein' it develop."

Morgan, son of veteran Kansas City newspaperman Ray Morgan, left a post on the Federal Election Commission to join the DFPEC — which, he says, has "enormous" legal housekeeping problems. Not only must the campaign organization deal with the same kinds of legal matters as any \$27 million corporation, but with those peculiar financial accountability requirements imposed by federal law. "I've enjoyed it," said Morgan.

An insight into his problems is provided by the fact that no one on the staff seemed to know precisely how many staffers the DFPEC had at the moment, how much it was costing per day, week or month to operate; what the projected final staffing level would be or how much that would cost.

"I have no idea," admitted Comptroller Jim Hagen cheerfully when he was asked what this month's expenses would be. "We had an original budget, but it's being revised."

At present, he noted, most of his effort is going into drafting an FEC report, due April 15. "We are gonna meet that deadline," he declared. FEC guidelines forbid a campaign to accept more than \$100 from any individual, and Hagen said if the DFPEC were to receive more than five cash contributions, they would have to set up a separate account and "probably give the money to charity."

A political campaign, observed Hagen, is "probably the only place where an accounting department is a revenue-producing agency. It's very important to make the budget match the campaign."

Hagen admitted because many past political campaigns have ended up far in debt — and because it's notoriously hard to raise money to pay off a lost cause — "it's very difficult for a presidential candidate to set up any type of (bank) account." He paused, grinned and added, "Hopefully, we'll raise the money, and if we do, we'll spend it."

Former Colorado Democratic Sen. Gary Hart, for example, the front runner for his party's 1988 Presidential nomination, still owes more than \$1 million from his 1984 campaign — a factor that hampers his fund-raising for '88. Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, still owes some \$1.5 million to banks, and both Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Calif., and the Rev. Jesse Jackson (who may again seek the Democratic Presidential nomination) also are still in debt.

DFPEC officials were mildly evasive about staff salaries, but said most full-time staffers were making from \$18,000 to \$22,000 or \$23,000 a year — low considering costs in the nation's capital.

"This is more of a crusade," explained Clinkenbeard. "The pot of gold is at the end of the rainbow for us." He looked around. "Every one of these people are just political animals," he added, mixing his cases. He laughed. "If I wanted to make money, I'd be a CPA in Topeka, Kan. It's the idea that you can wake up in the morning and be excited about work."

"Politics," Clinkenbeard remarked sententiously, "is long hours, hard work and a lot of fun. And the ability to work with people."

That's one of the reasons he stands well with Dole, he indicated. "We both like to work about seven days a week, so we get along very well." Clinkenbeard also noted his wife fits right in. She was a Reagan-Bush volunteer in the last presidential campaign. "We love politics."

Came from a family of Democrats, and they all think I'm crazy," said 23-year-old Mike Glassner happily.

A Peabody native who earned a political science degree from the University of Kansas in the spring of 1985, Glassner started as a Dole volunteer in high school, putting up yard signs, and continued in college. After graduation and a stint in the Senate mail room, he went to work for Clinkenbeard and then shifted over to serve as Dole's personal assistant during out-of-town trips.

"I've had three weekends off since February 1986," Glassner reported. "I've been in 47 states." He explained he collects memoranda, works with the scheduling department and does anything else the senator needs done. "He gives me lots of marching orders," the blond young Kansan said. "When the campaign starts, I'll be on the road all the time." Meanwhile, "I kinda keep an eye on what's goin' on in Washington for him."

Glassner recalled when he went to work for Dole in January '86, "there were about five people workin' for Campaign America. I've seen this go from no organization in any state to this. I think (Dole) expects to win! His pitch has changed on the road in the last two weeks, too. Before he had the committee established, he couldn't talk about being President."

Dole seems to be one of those people with the useful ability to compartmentalize life. When he is in his Capitol office, he is a working senator — sometimes to the disadvantage of his candidacy, as happened more than once in the 1976 campaign. Similarly, in last week's tussle to get the Senate to sustain the President's veto of the highway construction bill, Dole got so deeply involved in what he was doing that he grew very short with his fellow senators — even growling at Pressler, his stalwart supporter (who had voted to override).

And, sandwiching a 10-minute visit with a group of Kansas cattlemen into his high-pressure day, he remarked to them that "I've got Elizabeth locked in one room with a bunch of 'em, the Vice President in there with another bunch, and me in here with the rest."

Although he was gracious and attentive to the cattlemen, it was clearly an effort, and he soon excused himself and hurried back to the fray.

But when he is on the road, he is all politician, says Glassner. "When we're on the campaign trail, we talk about campaign business 100 percent," and Dole never slows down. "I think the more there is, the better he likes it. He loves it."

Well, maybe. But no matter what the game, Dole is not a gracious loser, and when he is locked in a downward cycle he can be testy enough to try the patience of even his closest supporters.

On the night the Ford-Dole ticket lost to Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale in 1976, for example, Dole lashed out at his staff so bitterly one friend later said, "He was like a snake." But, when he recovered somewhat from his bitterness and depression, he saw that part of his problem was himself — and the public perception of Bob Dole of Kansas.

His response was typical. He set about to fix it.

As one backer told a Washington newsmen, "Dole, when he sees he's got a problem, he tries to change it. Take the hatchet-man issue. When he decided, 'I've got to fix that,' he was able to change it. He can overcome those things. Dole is perceived very differently today because of conscious acts. That's something most politicians just cannot do."

So okay. But it was apparent last week that both staff and colleagues still tread very softly indeed when things are not going well for the boss.

Can this man be elected President? Would he make a good President?

To the first question: Probably, despite the undisputed fact that at one time or another, Dole has angered half the influential groups in the country. Even among Kansas farmers, suffering in hard times, there's a small "Dump Dole" movement. "I put 'em down as 'undecided,'" quips Dole. And this week he drew the ire of labor unions for backing the National Right-To-Work Committee in blocking legislation that would forbid construction and trucking companies from setting up non-union subsidiaries to avoid compliance with labor agreements. Nevertheless (or perhaps because of that), he's widely perceived as honest (rare for a politician) and as a man who's willing to listen; perhaps to help any worthy cause.

To the second question: Again, probably — although he might have trouble delegating authority; the opposite of President Reagan's problem. Like Lyndon Johnson, Dole is very much a "hands on" politician. As Senate majority leader prior to last fall's election, Dole imposed a tight control foreign to that body for a quarter century. He could be expected to do the same for the Presidency. Dole's style would not be to sit in the Oval Office and complain that his memos were ignored, as did Dwight Eisenhower — the last Kansan to hold the job.

Whether he will be elected, of course, is up to the voters.

Meanwhile, one thing is certain:

No matter whether he's working at being a senator or at being a politician, Dole is probably the most effective Senate tactician since LBJ — but in a totally different way.

Where the big Texas populist bullied, bribed, blackmailed and bulldozed to get his way, Dole simply outgenerals his opponents.

He prefers the classic maneuvers of warfare, such as his favored frontal demonstration followed by a surprise attack from flank or rear, as he showed in outmaneuvering the American Restaurant Association. The ARA opposed a proposed requirement in the 1982 tax code revision making restaurants keep records and report tips for the first time, as taxable income. The restaurant owners lobbied hard, and finally succeeded in defeating the proposal. Then they — and their Senate supporters — went out to celebrate.

At 2 a.m. Dole returned to the Senate chamber, where activity was continuing in a marathon session, and quietly introduced an amendment halving the business entertainment deduction: the so-called "three martini lunch." The effect would have been far more costly to the restaurant industry — and the amendment promptly passed on the Senate floor.

In conference committee, the appalled restaurant lobby and the labor lobby (representing the waitresses), quickly offered to trade back. Dole agreed — thereby gaining what he'd wanted all along.

In Washington, one of the most popular games in town is one called Keeping Score. Anyone can play, and bureaucrats by the tens of thousands do, right along with their elected bosses.

It's a hardball game, and none of them is interested in championing a loser.

So it was instructive, last week, to note that in one of Washington's loveliest seasons, at the peak of the cherry blossoms, nearly 30 eager young volunteers chose to ignore the whole thing; to spend all day every day locked away in a sparsely-furnished office suite organizing and fund raising, plotting and planning, licking envelopes and making phone calls, all with the single goal of getting this dark Kansan elected chief executive of the United States of America.

They weren't even conscious of the cherry blossoms or the soft spring weather. Their eyes were fixed firmly on the calendar. And on the opposition.

For them, the campaign is on.

It won't stop until the Presidential inauguration ceremony of 1989. And if they have anything to say about it, Bob Dole of Russell, Kan., is going to be sworn in as the 41st President.



Much of the space in the Dole headquarters is nearly empty now — but it will fill up fast.