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THE SUNDAY SUN, Lowell, Mass., September 27, 1987 A9

A mellow Robert Dole starts to relax on the campaign trail

By MIKE FEINILBER
Associated Press Writer

GRINNELL, Iowa (AP) — The Republican faithful are gathered in the 4-H building on the Poweshiek County fair grounds to feast on raw Democratic meat sliced up by Bob Dole and then, for their \$7.50 contribution, to sit down for a Sunday afternoon meal of roasted pig, biscuits, beans, cole slaw, potato salad, pecan pie, rhubarb pie, apple pie.

But first Dole. And the Dole they see is a more relaxed, more polished Dole than the one the country came to know in 1976. He talks about compassion. He brags that he is a friend of George McGovern, once the very symbol of everything the GOP stands against.

He remembers that "every day in the last couple of years of her life" his mother would tell him, "Don't touch my Social Security."

Oh, says Dole, the Senate minority leader from Kansas, he is still a conservative. You could look it up. "I've voted about 10,700 times in the last 27 years and you're going to find a consistently conservative record, and one who cares about people."

So solidly comfortable in his old-shoe orthodoxy that he is willing to joke about it.

Telling the story

All across Iowa these autumn weekends, with mustard and relish, he tells the story: How Bob Dole Became a Republican.

He came home from World War II, after 30 months in Army hospitals, his right arm rendered useless, a war hero. Both parties wooed him as a candidate.

"And I said I don't know anything about politics," says Dole. "They said you don't have to know anything about politics, but you've been shot and maybe we can get you elected. I remember talking to the Democrats and talking to the Republicans and I remember the Republicans saying, 'We don't care what those Democrats told you, just keep one thing in mind — there are twice as many Republicans in Russell County as Democrats.'"

"I said, 'I've just made a great philosophical judgment: I'm a Republican.'"

Dole even risks small jokes at Ronald Reagan's expense, such as how politicians love to claim rural roots. "Oh, a lot of people

are sympathetic to the farmer," he says. "Jimmy Carter had a farm. (Pause.) Ronald Reagan's got a horse."

And, more pointedly, in a speech earlier in the day at Clear Lake, Iowa, "Do you want someone in the White House

would be about 1.6 million Americans?"

Noticeable change

He can joke about that too. "In the Mondale debate, I went for the jugular — my own."

"I've voted about 10,700 times in the last 27 years and you're going to find a consistently conservative record, and one who cares about people."

— Sen. Dole

More about himself

Dole used to shy away from talking about himself. For a time, his campaign speeches sounded like a call of the Senate agenda of pending business. Now he talks about the hard days in Russell, Kan.

Father ran a cream and egg store. Didn't finish high school; wore overalls for 42 years and was proud of it. Mother drove across Kansas selling Singer sewing machines from the trunk of the car.

Dole, home from the war, went to school on the GI Bill, and got elected Republican county attorney. One responsibility was approving the monthly welfare rolls. Every month, his eyes went down the list and found the names of his grandparents, Robert D. and Margaret Dole.

"Not because they were lazy. They weren't. They were farmers. They were tenant farmers. They were kicked off the farm. They were broke."

He is no longer the Midwestern lone eagle who, running against Reagan and the field in 1980, was so soundly drubbed in Iowa that he gave up. "I remember calling town meetings in 1979, and nobody showed up," he says of that vain effort. "Nobody except me and the poor soul who agreed to have the meeting."

In Washington, he is still the hardball player, capable of saying on the Senate floor, "I didn't become majority leader to lose." But on the campaign trail he is doing all he can to erase the image of the glowering Dole who, as Gerald Ford's 1976 running mate, savagely lit into Democrat Walter Mondale in a debate ("If we added all the killed and wounded in all Democratic wars in this century, it

Now Dole comes across as a most happy fella, a more relaxed candidate.

Voter Frank Dotseth, 53, of Anamosa, Iowa, who gives seminars on stress management to nurses and others in difficult jobs, says he noticed the change.

"His hair graying has helped him," Dotseth told a reporter at a Dole rally. "It's not so slick. He just needed a little softening."

To survive as George Bush's chief competitor, Dole must do well in the February caucuses in Iowa, neighbor to his native state, but he senses he is doing well, here and throughout the farm belt. He leads in the polls in Iowa.

At the state fair in Minnesota, he says, 8,000 people voted in a poll and he led, with 38 percent of the votes; at the South Dakota state fair, it was 57 percent.

"That tells me something," he says, pausing with a comedian's timing. "It says people are going to the fairs."

On a weekend jet bill of Iowa, no poli delighted Dole more than the one at the tiny Great Midwestern Ice Cream Co., where the flavors were named for candidates.

He studied the tote board and found "Dole's Top Banana," out-killing "Bush Preppymint," "Kemp's Quarterback Crunch," "Hart's Donna Rice Cream," even "Robertson's Born Again Chocolate."

Dole walked through the ice cream parlor, stopping at every Iowa's table to shake hands. He settled down to a banana split, banana ice cream, please. When the counter girls, chagrined, confessed they were out of banana, Dole let them sell cones of other flavors to his entourage — as long as each scoop was counted as banana.

Why I Believe The Right Should Now Support Robert Dole

By DAVID KEENE

THOSE OF US who were involved will never forget the 1976 Reagan campaign. From the narrow loss to Gerald Ford in New Hampshire to our unexpected victory in North Carolina and the final heart-breaking struggle at the Kansas City Convention, it was an epic struggle that positioned Ronald Reagan for his triumph of 1980.

In retrospect, that Convention saw the last gasp of the Republican "moderates" many of us had fought for so long. They won the nomination with an incumbent they had adopted, but only because of the power of the Presidency itself and with party rules that kept the conservative majority from voting for the candidate that it really wanted.

When it was over, there were those on the winning side who wanted desperately to strike one final blow by nominating a candidate for Vice President from the so-called "moderate" camp. They wanted both to thumb their noses at the Reagan wing of the party and to give themselves a successor in the White House should we win the general election.

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Our people held firm, however, insisting that whoever Ford picked would have to be someone acceptable to Ronald Reagan personally, and to the Reagan forces on the Convention floor. Finally, after hours of negotiation, the President's men decided on a candidate many of the Reagan people had at the top of their list. He was Senator Robert Dole of Kansas.

The selection of Bob Dole was heartily approved by the Reagan forces. Those of us nervously waiting for word from the negotiations breathed a great sigh, and the tension in the Convention hall quickly dissipated, when word reached the delegates that it would indeed be Senator Dole. This is important, and should serve to remind any conservative who has forgotten that Bob Dole has been our man for a very long time.

Senator Dole was accepted by both sides in 1976 for a variety of reasons. The Ford people didn't want anyone who had actively opposed the President in the primaries, but the Reagan people demanded a conservative. They knew Dole was a conservative, and they knew too that he has appeal

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beyond the confines of the movement itself—to regular Republicans.

Moreover, both sides were concerned about the Republican base vote. At the time of the Convention, Jimmy Carter enjoyed a thirty-point lead over Gerald Ford and the Ford people realized they needed someone who could appeal to traditional Republicans in the farm states while rallying conservatives to the party's banner. Bob Dole could do all of those things.

It wasn't enough, of course, and Jimmy Carter won. But Bob did everything he was asked in that campaign and took his lumps for it.

In fact, when that race ended, the liberal press crowed that Bob Dole was finished as a national politician. Attempting a self-fulfilling prophecy, they derided his performance and consigned him to oblivion, only to watch him emerge a few years later as one of the two most influential Republicans in the country. Those enemies and that comeback tell us a lot about the character of Bob Dole.

Conservative Republican. Since first being elected to Congress in 1961, Robert Dole has cast perhaps 20,000 recorded votes on every imaginable issue. He fought the excesses of Lyndon Johnson in the Sixties, was our leader on the House floor, and he was still standing with the right in fighting the giveaway of the Panama Canal in the Seventies. He has spent twenty years or more battling for a strong defense, and his leadership will be crucial to the funding of the Contra freedom fighters this fall. He has emerged as the leader who steered

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much of the Reagan program through the Senate. The defense buildup of the Eighties would not have happened had Bob Dole not been in the Senate, nor would there have been a Reagan tax reform.

The senior Senator from Kansas is, in short, a conservative of proven commitment and long standing. His American Conservative Union lifetime rating demonstrates this clearly, as does his fierce support for President Reagan's program.

The fact is, though, that virtually all of the men vying for the Republican nomination this time are at least acceptable from a conservative perspective. Their positions on the major issues may differ at the margins, but none of them is likely to reject or reverse the political revolution begun by Ronald Reagan in 1980. While each would refine the Reagan agenda in his own way, I suspect that if we Republicans win in 1988, Ronald Reagan will be able to view the programs of his successor with approval and gratification.

This is as true of a Bob Dole or George Bush as it is of Pete du Pont, Pat Robertson, or Jack Kemp. They are all dedicated to the goals of the man they hope to succeed. The simple truth is conservatives have won the war for the soul of the G.O.P. that raged for more than a decade. We are now unified on our core issues and concentrating on keeping one of our own in the White House.

Fighting To Govern. "Our" man must be someone who shares our goals, of course, but he also must

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have the skills and personal qualities needed to govern effectively. Ronald Reagan's impact on our politics will be judged by history and the willingness of his successor to build on what he began. Reagan's skills as a campaigner and a communicator, combined with his personal qualities, allowed him to reverse the way Americans looked at the role of government and to seize the rhetorical and political high ground for the first time in forty years.

It was a tremendous accomplishment, but the Reagan revolution could end with the Presidency of Ronald Reagan if the Democrats win in 1988, or if his Republican successor lacks the skills to build on the framework laid by President Reagan. Thus, in a very different way, the task of Ronald Reagan's successor will be as important to our long-range goals as was the Reagan role itself.

Most Presidents fail as leaders because they lack the skills necessary to translate their goals into public policy, or the will to persevere when danger or circumstances drive others mad. And a successful President must be able both to articulate his vision of America's future to the public and to deal with the unwieldy machinery of the government he is elected to manage. He has to manage an often hostile Congress, convince our allies abroad that he deserves their respect and allegiance, and sit across the negotiating table or the battlefield from our most brutal enemies without flinching from terrible responsibility.

These are not easy tasks. Each President

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ident has been better at some of them than others; and, since Presidents are human like the rest of us, that will no doubt always be the case. I am personally convinced though, that on the basis of his record, his experience in public and private life, and his ability to deal honorably and effectively with the great issues, Robert Dole has the makings of a successful and perhaps a great President.

Personal Qualities. The perseverance that allowed Bob Dole to overcome war injuries that would have destroyed a weaker man is a personal trademark and a trait that has helped him overcome political adversity with compassion and self-effacing wit. The man has mastered himself, and he can lead.

You see, I am convinced that Bob Dole is more than just another conservative. Over the years he has proved time and again that he can get things done. He is a leader who is in the business of translating our philosophical and political desires into public policy. Indeed, among the active candidates, only Bob Dole can say that he has the proved skills to get us where we all want to go. He has never been content merely to sit in the room while others make the decisions, or to stand on the sidelines and cheer; he has always taken his place at the table and made his mark on the decisions themselves. The President has been grateful for this, saying that without Bob Dole's leadership in the Senate much of the Reagan agenda might have amounted to little more than rhetoric.

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