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## Dole to announce presidential candidacy

### Hometown and family welcome favorite son

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING  
Great Plains Editor

RUSSELL — Tables of homemade food lined one side of the Russell 4-H Building. Across the room, against a background of Bob Dole for President signs, the man himself stepped to the podium. He looked out over the crowd of about 200 friends and relatives and smiled.

"I think I have more relatives now than the last time I ran for president," he said.

The laughter was immediate. Bob Dole, the town's favorite son, had come home. Home to start the long journey he hopes will lead to the nation's highest office.

Today Dole is to announce he is a Republican candidate for president. Then it's on to Iowa and New Hampshire, two key states in the primary process.

But Sunday — despite the television cameras and the other hoopla surrounding his arrival — Dole managed to find time for his family.

At the 4-H Building, relatives staged a potluck dinner for Dole and his wife, Elizabeth. They were accompanied by Dole's daughter, Robin.

The hit of the gathering, however, was Dole's Aunt Ethel Crissman, who will be 83 Nov. 20.

Crissman, who calls herself the family poet, read a poem to Dole. It was titled "Success."

"Now you see you must push; we want you to win over Vice President (George) Bush," Crissman said.

"One of the greatest things there could be is to have a president in our family."

After Crissman had returned to her seat, Dole asked, "Anybody else want to speak? Anybody want to announce for office or anything else like that?"

Then he continued with a theme that is expected to be at the heart of his message today.

He praised the folks of Russell for being "what America is all about." He praised them for their work ethic and their strength in the face of adversity.

"If we made anything we got there the hard way," Dole said.

He encouraged the audience to support his candidacy in Iowa and other states.

Polls, he said, show 70 percent of Americans know his name, compared to 97 percent who know the name of his principal Republican rival, Vice President Bush.

"I think if I do well in Iowa, I'm on my way," Dole said. "If you have any friends in Iowa, or if you know someone who isn't a friend, or if you have a creditor in Iowa, write them a note."

Home-state supporters spent the past six months writing 100,000 letters to Iowa residents, he said. The letters are to be mailed Jan. 25, Kansas Day.

"The next 100 days may tell what happens," Dole said. "I have a long way to go before I get up to Bush, but I think there's that opportunity."

With typical Dole wit, he added, "If it works, we'll have the next one of these in the White House. If it doesn't work you'll never have to come to one of these again, because I'll never run again. So either way you win."

J.W. Schmitt, a Dole cousin from Gorham, said he found out about the reunion several days ago.

"We've had a lot of family reunions, but I don't think we've ever had this kind of turnout," he said. "I guess these are all relatives, but a lot of them I've never seen before."

Relative or not, it was difficult, if not impossible, to find anyone in the crowd who wasn't a Dole supporter. Most wore small gold "Dole" pins.

"The chances look real good that I may be the first cousin to a president," Schmitt said. Similar feelings were expressed Sunday throughout the town.

Dole signs could be seen everywhere — on private homes, in the windows of businesses.

At a downtown store, Bob Dole's picture was displayed above a flashing sign advertising a carpet sale. On another business: "News Item: Bob Dole Moving to the White House."

At the downtown intersection of Eighth and Main, where Dole is to make his announcement today, workers readied the stage. Several blocks already were blocked to traffic.

Volunteers strung banners proclaiming,

(See Family, Page 3)

### Voters, friends admire senator's background

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING  
Great Plains Editor

If the 1988 presidential election were tomorrow, Mike Grundman probably would vote for Sen. Bob Dole.

Grundman, who works at the insurance business his father started more than three decades ago in Corning, Iowa, is impressed with Dole's sense of humor and his apparent honesty.

"He's not always tactful," Grundman said of Dole. "He tells things the way they are, and I like that. I also like the fact he's from the Midwest. He probably perceives things a little more realistically because of it."

Across the street, though, at the National Organization for Farmers, the adjectives used to describe Dole aren't as complimentary.

Dean Stamps, who has worked there since 1971 as manager of the printing and mailing division, said he wonders about Dole's ability to tackle important issues — the national debt, the foreign trade deficit, education, the problems of the elderly.

Because Dole has been in Washington for more than 20 years, Stamps — who likes to think of himself as an independent voter — fears the senator may be part of the problem rather than the solution.

In recent years, Stamps said, two of his four brothers have lost their farms in bank failures. He believes people in rural America have the idea Washington lawmakers simply don't care about their problems.

"We need to get new people into the White House with new ideas," Stamps said. "I would have trouble voting for the senator, frankly. I think he may have lost some of his grassroots."

### Burying the past

On Nov. 9 — hundreds of miles away from Corning — Dole plans to return to his hometown of Russell and make his presidential bid official.

The announcement will be greeted by music and the release of thousands of balloons. The crowd in Russell that day is expected to almost double the town's population of more than 5,000.

Dole will make his appearance early because later in the day he wants to campaign in Iowa, the site of party caucuses Feb. 8.

But no matter how much enthusiasm the senator takes with him from Kansas, people in Russell know he still has a tough fight ahead. Currently, he and George Bush are considered the Republican front-runners. But there's still months to go before the national convention next summer, and about anything can happen between now and then.

Dole supporters in Kansas say voters who have harsh words for the senator probably still remember the 1976 presidential race,

(Continued from Page 1)

when the Republican from Russell was chosen as President Gerald Ford's running mate. During that contest, in a debate with Walter Mondale in Houston, Dole said Watergate — the scandal that eventually drove Republican Richard Nixon from office — should be no more of an issue than those "Democrat wars."

Mondale's retort: "You have richly earned your reputation as a hatchet man."

It's a reputation Dole has been trying to live down since.

"He has to overcome his old image as a hatchet man," said Norbert Dreiling, a Hays attorney and former Democratic state chairman. "In those days, he was sarcastic, biting — usually at the expense of someone else."

"Now his one-liners are pretty good. They're good because he has learned to make himself the object of the irony. I think he has learned a lot."

### The Dole background

Some people talk of the "New Bob Dole," a man who entered Kansas politics as a "right-wing conservative" opposed to aid to education and health and trade with any communist country, who matured into a polished national leader with a flair for pragmatism and compromise.

But those who have known Dole for years say the man himself hasn't changed. They say his ideals and his character, springing from the honest, hard work ethic of rural Kansas.

"Bob Dole was very dependable. He always did his homework — always," said Alice Mills, a former Dole teacher. "He came from a family that wanted him to do the right thing."

Dole was born in 1923, the second child and first son of Doran and Bina Dole, operators of the local creamery.

His younger brother, Kenneth, from his office in Russell's Dole Building, often talks about those early years, and the hard financial times the family overcame.

From Kenneth Dole and others, a portrait emerges of young Bob Dole as a serious, hard-working youth — not above an occasional outing with his pals, but more concerned with setting and attaining goals. The word "determined" often is used to describe Dole.

Dole was an outstanding athlete in high school and went on to play basketball for the legendary Phog Allen at the University of Kansas.

He wanted to be a doctor, but that dream ended during World War II in 1945 in a clearing in Italy's Po Valley. As a result of German gunfire, Dole's right arm was shattered.

Kenneth Dole remembers visiting his brother in a hospital in Battle Creek, Mich., and being shocked by his appearance.

All four of Dole's limbs were paralyzed and he had lost 70 pounds. Doctors feared he might not live. Dole eventually spent 39 months in hospitals before he was allowed to return to Russell.

"If I ever get out of here, I have to make up the lost years of my life," Dole told Kenneth.

"He's made it up, many times over," Kenneth said.

It's Dole's war experiences that strike many people who don't know the senator personally.

Corning's Grundman said the Des Moines Register did a series of newspaper articles on presidential candidates. He doesn't remember much about the story on Dole — except the part about his war record.

For Grundman and others, the story provides insight into Dole's character. People in Russell collected about \$5,000 to send Dole to a physician in Chicago so his right arm could be pieced together.

"He has gone through a lot personally that I think it would leave a pretty indelible mark on his character," Dreiling said. "He was in a position where he had to ask (for help), and that humbles a person."

### The political years

Dole was elected to the Kansas Legislature in 1950 at age 28. He was a law student at the Topeka's Washburn University at the time. He came home to Russell in 1953 and served four terms as county attorney.

During those years, Dole's office light in the Russell County Courthouse often burned past midnight.

The hard work continued as Dole climbed the political ladder, first as a U.S. representative and later as U.S. senator.

In 1976, he returned to Russell as Ford's running mate. The man who would be criticized during the campaign as harsh and negative wept openly before thousands of his friends and supporters.

"I can think of all the times the people of Russell helped me when I needed help...," Dole managed to say before his emotions overtook him.

Three years later, he finished his hometown tribute. This time, Dole was in Russell to announce he would be a candidate for president in the 1980 election.

"I came home simply because the strength I need for the undertaking before me is here," he said.

But it wasn't to be. Lacking money, organization and name recognition, Dole withdrew from the race months later.

He went back to his Senate duties, and in 1984 was elected majority leader. He now is minority leader.

Along the way he found time for other jobs, including the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee from 1971 to 1973.

His national activities have been criticized in Kansas, where voters are sometimes reluctant to share their senator. But as a southwest Kansas rancher told the Salina Journal several years ago: "Bob Dole is such a hard worker, having him part time is like having anyone else full time."

And it was that old-fashioned hard work that earned Dole his political success, said Mary-nell Reece, a member of the Republican National Committee from Scandia.

She said Dole is a man who does his homework, just as he was many years ago in Alice Mills' Russell classroom.

"I think that has gained him respect on both sides of the aisle," Reece said. "People know where he stands. He's able to make the tough decisions and live with them. And he has an unlimited amount of energy. When he was chairman of the Republican National Committee, I think he must have worked around the clock."

### 'The evolution'

Dreiling, a Dole friend even though he is on the opposite side of the political fence, refers to the senator's first years in Congress as his "witch hunting days."

"He could out-Nixon Nixon," Dreiling said. But the Hays Democrat said Dole's conservative ways should be viewed in the context of the district he served.

"A representative votes the wishes of his district," Dreiling said. "The fact is there aren't very many who remain in office long who don't represent the wishes of their district. When Dole was right wing, it was because he represented a right-wing district."

"Then he was elected to the Senate, and he added Wichita, Kansas City, the industrial centers. His tone began to moderate; his interests began to expand."

Reece used all the usual words to describe Dole — determined, hard-working, intelligent, and she adds one of her own — compassionate. She recalled an episode several years ago when Dole made his first run for the White House. He was at a meeting of Midwest Republicans in Indianapolis. Each candidate was given five minutes to speak.

Just as Dole's turn came, a boy who had trouble talking stood and asked a question. Reece said organizers wanted him to wait, but

he stumbled on. Finally, Dole went to the boy and talked with him.

As a result, he lost his five minutes.

"He is very concerned about social issues and people," Reece said.

### Looking ahead

In Seattle, Robert Pearson, a Republican, has seen Dole only on television and read about him in news publications. He said he doesn't remember Dole as the "hatchet man."

"Instead, when he thinks of the Kansas senator, he sees someone he considers strong and capable."

"As of today, I would vote for him," said Pearson, a businessman.

Across the country, in Charlotte, N.C., Angela Dole, a florist, said friends often tease her husband, Kenneth Dole, a trucking company employee, about being related to Dole. Of course he isn't, but Angela Dole said her husband takes the kidding with good nature.

She said they like the senator and his wife, Elizabeth Dole, a former transportation secretary from their state.

Angela Dole isn't sure people in North Carolina will vote for Dole because of his wife, but she said having Elizabeth Dole at his side won't hurt his chances.

Reece said she has been to meetings recently in Washington and Florida. In both states she was bombarded with questions about her fellow Kansan and how people here feel about him.

"People are wanting a president who can make some tough decisions," Reece said. "We have some tough problems. I think Bob Dole's chances are good."

Dreiling said if the Republicans are interested in qualifications, they will nominate Dole.

"He's brilliant. He's dedicated — and he has prepared himself for the role," he said.