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'Heartland' Reaches Out to GOP

By TIM KIDD
Staff Writer

RUSSELL, Kan. — President Ford and Sen. Bob Dole Friday began their 73-day presidential campaign in what Dole described as "the heartland of America" — his hometown of Russell. For the Kansas senator it was a triumphant return home after a turbulent Republican convention in Kansas City. He smiled broadly as he led the President through a crowd of several thousand persons on Main

Street and on the shaded lawn of Russell County Courthouse. But when Dole attempted to express his gratitude to the town by recalling "the time I needed help — and the people of Russell helped," the words suddenly stopped. In tears and unable to go on for perhaps 15 seconds, Dole lifted his left hand to cover his face. Later, townspeople explained that the senator's rare show of emotion probably stemmed from memories of a local drive that raised \$5,000 to help

Dole pay medical expenses related to his wounds from World War II. After Dole regained his composure amid hearty and reassuring applause, he said, "That was a long time ago, and I thank you for it again." Ford praised Dole as "a wonderful teammate" and said he had decided "Bob Dole was the guy" after considering "the tough campaign . . . and the four years ahead." The President acknowledged Kansas as a producer of wheat, cattle and oil, but said he was most im-

pressed that Kansas "produces such great statesmen
"You not only produce cattle and wheat and energy, but doggone it, you produce great people."

He mentioned half a dozen Kansans in support of his point, including Dwight Eisenhower, Alf Landon and Frank Carlson.

The President said Dole will be an asset to the Republican ticket because of his experience at all levels of government — local, state and federal — and because of his knowledge of their interaction.

"We have to bring Washington, D.C., and local government closer together," Ford said.

He added that he expects Dole to help work out tax relief for middle-income Americans, and to help increase the estate tax exemption from \$60,000 to at least \$150,000. The latter is being sought by farm organizations to help

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Dole thanks home town, fights back tears

Veep Proposal Not Bad — Ford

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — President Ford suggested Friday that the proposed change in vice presidential selection defeated at the Republican National Convention might not be a bad idea.

"Some of the things which came up this week . . . ought to be looked at," Ford told the Repu-

can National Committee. He indicated he meant Reagan's suggestion that presidential contenders be required to disclose their choice of running mate in advance of their own nomination.

Reagan, who had named Sen. Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania as his proposed running mate, lost an attempt to get the convention to force Ford to name his choice in the first big test vote of the convention.

The President and his running mate, Sen. Bob Dole, then flew to Russell, Kan., Dole's hometown, for the first official campaign stop of the new ticket.

Ford and Dole acknowledged the cheers from residents of the picturesque prairie town, spoke from the courthouse steps and ate hot dogs in a park.

Dole also took up Ford's example and challenged his Democratic counterpart, Sen. Walter Mondale, to debate him during the campaign. Mondale agreed to it in principle.

FORD LATER FLEW to his vacation retreat at Vail, Colo. Mrs. Ford had flown directly there from Kansas City. The family, including son Jack and daughter Susan, will spend a week at Vail before returning to Washington.

Ford's comment about vice presidential selection came at a breakfast meeting of the national committee and apparently was intended as a peace gesture to Ronald Reagan's supporters. However, the President was

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preserve family farms by preventing forced sales for tax payments. Ford also told his rural listeners, "the farmers of America must get a fair price in a free market."

Dole recalled that during his eight years as Russell County attorney in the 1950s, he never envisioned being a vice presidential candidate.

Even when the President telephoned him Thursday morning and asked if he'd like to be on the ticket, Dole said, "It was a complete surprise to me."

He added, "I don't really believe it yet today."

Dole said his rise in politics demonstrates that "you don't need all the wealth and material things in the world to succeed — if I've succeeded."

THE PRESIDENT recalled that Dole had asked for one commitment on agreeing to run on the ticket — that Ford stop in Russell on his way to Colorado.

Dole said he had told the President, "If you want to start the campaign in the heartland, I know of a little town where we can start it."

About 2,500 persons, including city officials, greeted Ford and Dole as they arrived at old Schilling Air Force Base in Salina. The President, who wore a sunflower pin on his lapel, was given a small bouquet of sunflowers by a woman in a wheelchair.

The presidential party traveled by helicopter, not by motorcade as had

been expected, from the airport to Russell, 70 miles to the west. They then rode in a motorcade for the short trip downtown.

THE TWO candidates waved at the crowd through the sunroof of the President's limousine.

Nancy Lane, a Democrat and president of Russell's city council, introduced persons on the platform. Besides Dole and Ford, they included Dole's wife, mother and daughter; Gov. and Mrs. Robert Bennett; Sen. James Pearson; Rep. Keith Sebelius and Lt. Gov. Shelby Smith, all Kansas Republicans.

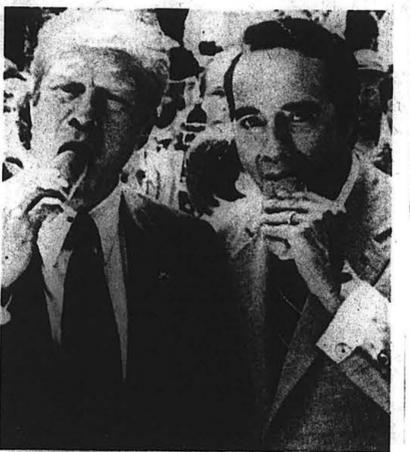
The crowd began cheering as soon as the motorcade arrived and pressed close to the President and Dole as they went about shaking hands.

When Dole stepped onto the grandstand first, a cheer arose. Almost immediately the President leaped onto the grandstand with Dole, waving his arms to the crowd and smiling, and the noise grew even louder.

BOTH CANDIDATES ate hot dogs that had been prepared as part of a picnic planned overnight by city officials. They departed shortly after 1 p.m., an hour after they had arrived.

Ford left Salina for a nine-day break in Vail, Colo. Dole left for Washington.

The President planned to play golf and tennis, and relax for a few days. Then, early next week, Dole and Ford's campaign advisers will travel to Colorado to plan how to beat Jimmy Carter.



CANDIDATES FILL UP ON HOT DOGS . . . Picnic was planned overnight by city officials

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hardly out of town before Republicans were fighting again.

The national committee accepted Ford's recommendation and re-elected Mary Louise Smith of Iowa as party chairman, but she was quickly under fire from the conservative wing.

As Mrs. Smith stood with a stunned expression at the rostrum, Texas National Committeeman Ray Hutchison moved to revoke the resolution which gave her power to name the executive committee.

He said the appointments of party officials which Mrs. Smith had made earlier in the meeting did not represent the South, Southwest, West or Midwest, although she noted that general counsel William Cramer is a former congressman from Florida.

"If we are to win in November," Hutchison said, "every segment of this country must be represented."

FINALLY, UNDER A compromise, Mrs. Smith was required to distribute executive committee memberships equally among the party's four geographic regions.

The meeting had started off pleasantly enough with Ford and Dole sitting at the head table and speaking briefly to the group before leaving for Russell. Dole commented that making "the first campaign stop in the heartland . . . is a great tribute to the President."

Ford, who had hailed the defeated Reagan down to the convention platform Thursday night, continued his goodwill efforts before the committee,

going along with his opponent's vice presidential proposal.

"I happen to believe there is a great deal of merit in that approach if we go about it in the right way," Ford said of the Reagan proposal. "I think the national committee ought to look at it and perhaps lay the groundwork for 1980."

FORD ALSO SAID that despite the intense combat between Ford and Reagan forces at the convention, "I think we have conducted ourselves in Kansas City in a superb way."

In Plains, Ga., Carter, apparently anticipating that Dole will lead the GOP attack against the Democratic ticket, said he would avoid responding to any personal attacks unless they came directly from Ford.

Carter also said he is eager to debate Ford and would be flexible on the format.

While House Press Secretary Ron Nessen said Ford would prefer a format of "hard questions by good tough reporters," Nessen said Republicans think Carter has been fuzzy on the issues and debates would "be the best way to bring out Carter's views."

MEANWHILE, THE St. Louis Post-Dispatch quoted top Ford aides as saying the President plans virtually to concede the entire South and most of the Northeast to the Democrats in the fall election.

Quoting unnamed sources, the newspaper said the Ford campaign intends to make the politically powerful industrial belt stretching from Pennsylvania to Wisconsin the major battleground of the campaign.