

110. 1976

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hospital and telephone office. Special equipment arrived in a rental truck at about 2:30 a.m. and by 5 a.m., any agent working in the area could use his walkie-talkie to talk directly through a combination of radio and land lines to anywhere in the nation--or world.

Cars were provided by dealers and turned into command cars for security. Agents from Kansas were brought in to check out known area characters and work with other officers.

Over 30 state troopers were assigned to Russell and began arriving in a matter of hours.

Special phone lines were provided for the airport, police station, hospital, courthouse square with back-up equipment ready for use. Buildings along the parade route were studied and checked. It was as smooth as a well-oiled machine or military maneuver.

Volunteer firemen were briefed for an hour Friday morning from the airport about helicopters, access, seating arrangements, and priorities for evacuation. Ambulances were assigned.

Thursday afternoon, at the hospital Administrator Fred Trombley received a call from the surgeon general's headquarters asking about facilities in Russell, Salina, and Hays. Doctors and nurses were alerted and schedules set. Particular interest in helicopter landing places and physical facilities of the plant was shown. Key buildings, including the hospital were checked and studied by the Secret Service.

On the courthouse square, the site for the speaker's stand was chosen to provide access, shade, and effective presentation of those on it.

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A portable bleacher was moved to the square to serve as a base from which news photographers and reporters could work. All of R. C. Williams, Inc., large trucks were on an oil rig moving job and the drivers were out of town. One driver, off work because of a broken leg, volunteered to man a truck to pick up the several ton bleacher and spot it in place--cast and all.

Dell Klema, Klema IGA, working with Republican and other women's organizations, searched the area to come up with 1,500 hot dogs, the most he could get. Buns were located in another city and sent by truck to Russell. The soda pop, over 1,000 cans, came by special truck from Hays. Women donated the barbecue grills. Men, from many organizations, set up tables, brought in the water tank used to chill the pop.

Secret Service men and officers staked off the lanes on the courthouse lawn to provide access from the caravan stopping place to the speakers' platform. An escape route was roped to the courthouse door so the entire party could be moved quickly to shelter if necessary.

Patrols were set up Friday morning to check the parade route and its buildings. One roofing crew, hard at work, was persuaded to lay off work and leave the roof until the parade had passed.

There was no detail overlooked. And, for whatever was needed, there were a half dozen or more volunteers ready to do it.

At The News, the tempo increased as the press people converged on Russell. Files, old papers, and even notes about Dole were made available. Typewriters were used and the dark room was kept busy throughout the night.

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UPI set up a photo sender in the camera room. Our employes became chauffeurs. In fact, my wife's 15-year-old VW was turned over to a crew from KAKE-TV, Wichita, Thursday afternoon until they left by chartered plane late Friday.

At about 2 p.m. Thursday, while I was completing some background material on a Dole story, the phone rang in my office. It was Bob Dole, calling from Kansas City to see if the White House staff had checked with us and if we could handle the Friday noon meeting.

While I was talking with Dole, I looked up to see the office filled with news people and a NBC TV crew filming the call from the doorway.

Dole friends and relatives spent much of Thursday digging through photo albums for pictures of Bob Dole and his family.

I have no count of the phone interviews I handled but through the weekend, there must have been 20 or more. Since that time, there have been reporters, phone calls, or letters from press sources on an average of about one or two a day.

On Saturday, Oct. 16, a unit manager, film and sound men from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Toronto, Canada, were in the office filming for a report they hope to use. While in Russell, they talked with and filmed four or five other people.

Although in actual time, it probably doesn't count as being significant, I found that the main thrust of interviews and phone calls was on Bob Dole's honesty and integrity. Collectively and individually, the eastern press appeared to find it extremely difficult to believe that the Bob Dole they were covering is the same Bob Dole I've known for 30 years.

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I've been in the newspaper business too long to flatly state that no man is Mr. Clean. But, at the same time, I've had 30 years, since 1947, to know and work with Bob Dole. If he has skeletons buried, I've been unable to find them and I've had a lot longer time to look for them than have these present day Johnny-Come-Latelys. I've learned, too, that the Kansas press corps is more reasonable, has a better understanding of human motivation, and is more knowledgeable about people and news than are those from the urban, metropolitan areas.

I never took time to think about why I feel better reporting news stories objectively until this Ford-Dole fete put me in touch with others in this business. Facts are facts and I personally am content to let them stand on their value. I am convinced that readers can--and will--sort them out and draw their own conclusions. Today's reporting, outside of the midwest, convinces me that if I am old-fashioned, I am that way by choice--and happy about it.

To date, I've put the Midwestern viewpoint on display in the Baltimore Sun, calmed down a rebel from the Boston Globe, explained the Bob Dole of Russell, Kan., to the San Francisco Bay Guardian, and spent sometime talking with various other news people, from Florida to New York about Midwestern values and how I've come to believe that Bob Dole represents them.

Win, lose or draw on the election, having a hometown boy on the national team is heady stuff. But, when and if it happens, you're too darn busy to think about it.

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