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Dole the candidate is the captive of an unwieldy alliance of local and national press who probe each of the candidate's speeches and "photo opportunities" for his opinions, style and a possible error. He worried about making political errors, but ended up covering for the President.

Continued from preceding page  
under great pressures, and plagued by the unguarded comments of both Ford and Carter. Dole cannot afford to make a mistake.  
"He doesn't want to stub his toe now," says one aide.

Friday, Oct. 15, brought a rainy, dismal darkness to Houston, where Dole prepared to do television battle with Mondale.  
Dole had arrived in Houston the day before the debate, suffering from a bad head cold and saying he was nervous. He studied all week for the debate which he constantly played down.  
"I assume the audience will be smaller," he said when he arrived in Houston. "As I said before, I think we can put them to sleep quicker than the presidential candidates did."

### 'I don't know how that could have happened, but somehow I was depicted and characterized as a gunslinger'

Dole was behind closed doors for several hours Thursday, but emerged long enough to attend a Republican fundraiser where he was courted and praised by John Connally, Texas' former governor and an early-on contender for the '80 Dole nomination.

Sen. Paul Laxalt, R-Nev., the Reagan campaign director, also appeared before the Texas Republicans, saying that once Reagan lost to Ford, Dole was his personal choice for vice president.

Reagan was on the lectern, too, for the display of pre-debate unity in the Heart of Texas and Reagan country.

Debate day dawned gray and overcast. Dole remained out of touch until a mid-day dry run before the cameras at the Alley Theatre stage. He was still suffering from the cold and told reporters he was taking a lot of medicine.

During the audio and visual tests Dole's necktie proved too much for the color cameras. The motorcade had to make a rugged journey through downtown Houston traffic where Dole and his wife chose two ties at an exclusive department store. Total cost, \$31.50.

At 8:05 p.m., Dole left the Hyatt Regency Hotel for the theatre and his debate before an audience estimated at 85 million.

Aboard the bus hauling Dole staffers and press to the debate, the atmosphere was muted, tense. As the bus slowed through rainy streets, everyone knew the debate was one of the most important events of the vice presidential campaign.

Ian Nofziger, Reagan's convention manager who now is working for Dole, said the debates probably weren't that important as a single event. But, he added, if one candidate performs poorly, it could have a bearing on the overall national campaign. In other words, Dole better hadn't blow it now.

In the theater an official for the League of Women Voters, which is sponsoring the debates, admonished the audience not to applaud or show any sign of agreement or disagreement during the telecast.

"If they tell a joke, laugh. It would look funny if you didn't," she advised the audience. "But don't laugh when it's inappropriate."

Mondale emerged first. Dole followed a split second later, smiling and waving to the audience. The two combatants shook hands, then went to their respective podiums and awaited the countdown. Dole was wearing the maroon tie he had purchased earlier. He and Elizabeth evidently didn't like the patterned red-and-blue one they also had bought.

The two sat staring at the moderator for what seemed an eternity until at 8:30 p.m., the first vice presidential debate in history opened.

And Bob Dole began his showmanship.  
He appeared the more relaxed of the two, frequently leaning against the podium on his left arm and staring at Mondale. At other times he would stare at the ceiling, smile faintly and nod a few notes.

The gentlemenly duel had its rather unmanly moments. Dole injected — somewhat surprisingly — some of the barbs he had thrown along the campaign trail.

He said George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, was Mondale's makeup man for the debate — a pointed one-liner that had worked before on Republican audiences.

"He did a pretty good job. He looks pretty good," Dole said.

He brought up Carter's interview in Playboy magazine, saying, "We'll give him the bunny vote."

He proclaimed to the television audiences that he would be the first to say "Watergate" during the debate and conceded Watergate was a Republican problem.

Later, he turned harsher. A remark he made linking Democratic administrations to all U.S. wars in this century caused Mondale to proclaim, "I think Sen. Dole has richly earned his reputation as a hatchet man tonight by saying World War II and the Korean War were Democratic wars."

The 23-minute skirmish was over and Dole staffers were all smiles.

Three Republicans who were there know po-

litical Bob Dole better than anyone: Dave Owen, former lieutenant governor and Dole campaign director; state GOP committeeman McDill "Huck" Boyd of Phillipsburg; and R. Doug Lewis, former executive secretary of the Kansas Republican party who now holds a like job in Texas. They said they'd never seen Dole more relaxed.

A confident Dole returned to the hotel where he was introduced at a rally by Connally. Dole told the Texas Republicans "I'm very glad the debate is over. I don't know who won. Do you?"

The remark raised an instant cheer and someone cried out, "Bob Dole for President in 1980."

Dole left Houston for the final campaign stretch. He stopped in Wichita at a reception for Rep. Garner Shriver, R-Kan., and said he

all around. It takes a while to put that together."

He has been in politics since his lengthy recovery from wounds received during World War II in fighting in Italy's Po River Valley. But for the 53-year-old man from Russell, the strike for the vice presidency has brought him to a new political stride.

Echoed in the splendor of San Francisco, the stark beauty of Salt Lake City, the heavily industrial northeast and the farm regions of the nation, Dole's often self-deprecating remarks show that he believes the best offense is a good defense. With a skill that rivals the best night club entertainer, Dole warms an audience with his one-liners.

"I remember the night of Watergate was my night off," he says, then pauses and in a hushed tone adds, "I think I had a job in Chicago but I can't remember."

He reminisced to UPI editors in Washington: "I remember whenever I went to the White House they were all worried about the tapes being released," he said. "I don't know if they were there but whenever I was asked a question I just nodded a lot."

Running for vice president is playing a low key to the President, but Dole is still tough.

"I've been characterized as a hatchet man and a hit man," he said early in his campaign. "I don't know how that could have happened, but somehow I was depicted and characterized as a gunslinger."

Yet at a Ford-Dole headquarters in Wilmington, N.C. before Ford debated Carter on foreign policy, Dole said the Democratic candidate threatened America with his ambition.

"This (the debate) is one place he can't call up some country and apologize if he makes a mistake. America will pay for his mistakes."

"He can say what he wants to in Playboy. That only affects Jimmy Carter. He can look at all the pictures he wants to. That only affects Jimmy Carter."

"He can tell Norman Mailer anything he wants which will not be reprinted in the New York Times because of its vulgarity."

But after the debate, it was the President who had committed the gaffe: over Soviet domination of eastern European countries, Dole quickly conceded it was a mistake on the President's part, explained it away by asking that people look at the President's record and sought the offensive by denouncing Carter's support of defense budget cuts and alleging errors of fact in Carter's debate statements.

Dole's campaign appearances don't generally create much of a stir. At the airport there are generally small crowds of local political figures who greet the candidate at the rampway. If a crowd is present — and it generally numbers 200 at the most — Dole smiles broadly and reaches out to them with his good left hand.

The vice presidential motorcades pass through towns and cities, drawing curious stares from residents who may or may not know who Bob Dole is.

Dole recognizes the fact he isn't well known outside party circles and that he is laboring under a cloud of obscurity.

"A lot of them (television viewers) don't know either Bob Dole or Walter Mondale so it may not be too exciting for any of us," he said before the debates.

His candidacy hardly reaches out to just plain folks. He spent part of one Saturday night stumping for two Virginia Republican candidates for Congress, both at exclusive residences in the posh suburban areas around Washington.

With rare exceptions — notably parades and an infrequent sojourn along the streets — his listeners are Republicans or mostly conservative groups. His purpose: to comfort Republicans.

The Tuesday before the vice presidential debate, for example, Dole took a six-hour trip to Maryville, Tenn., where, aides said, he would deliver one of his sharpest attacks on Carter.



One-liners from husband and candidate are sometimes cynical and always sharp, and the reason why Republicans would like to call him "Mr. Vice President" and Democrats call him a hatchet man. He feigns innocence of those charges, but never slows his attacks of Carter.

Sen. Howard Baker, R-Tenn., another who wanted Dole's job, met him at the airport, and denied to reporters there was animosity between them.

"To begin with there are no wounds," Baker said. "Bob Dole is not only an outstanding nominee for vice president, but I am heart and soul for him and besides that we're going to carry Tennessee for him and he's going to make an historic vice president of the United States. So you're wrong, dead wrong."

The visit to Tennessee was safe for Dole. Local Republicans proudly boasted the most Republican congressional district in the nation. A seat held by Republicans since 1858, they said.

"You just have to listen to his accusations, innuendoes and insults against the President of the United States to learn what Mr. Carter is all about," Dole told them. "I think we have all had enough of it. I've had enough of it. I hope the American people have had enough of it."

Real questions of integrity will be directed to Carter, Dole said.  
His delivery was flat, aides conceded, but his appearance served the Republican purpose.

Working under a tight budget, Dole usually travels to media centers to find electronic coverage. In Asheville, N.C., he did his first door-to-door work on the campaign. He visited three houses followed by television news camera crews.

One home was a Ford-Dole neighborhood headquarters in a block of junior executive homes. Ford workers had advanced Dole to be sure someone would be home to receive the vice-presidential candidate.

Rainy, damp weather frustrated the door-to-door work and the visit was shortened. But the television crews were there and they got plenty of footage of Dole greeting the families.  
That's what Dole workers wanted because



Chances for the Presidency in 1980 would be boosted by a Ford victory next month. "That's what this whole thing is all about, my friend," said an aide to the aspiring man from Russell.

House. He still, I think, is a man of decency, honesty and courage. He does stand up against the Congress. I don't suggest that he's perfect or that I'm perfect or that Carter or Mondale are perfect.

"I think we both, perhaps, have somewhat the same objectives. It's just how we may reach those objectives that should be the focus of attention.

There is, of course, another reason why Bob Dole is running. And his aides don't even blink when they're asked if Dole wants to be President.



A few moments in the off-cabin with journalists assigned to his campaign give Bob Dole and the reporters who follow him in the traveling political circus a chance to meter one another.

they knew a graphic display on television sets the image of Dole meeting people privately.

Some Dole workers privately smiled at the poor staging. There will be no more planned door-to-door campaigning, they say, but, again, his appearance served the Republican purpose.

Tall, thin, handsome in a Humphrey Bogart fashion — his voice even sounds hauntingly like Bogart at times — Dole is the picture of a candidate. His speeches are fast-clipped, often punctuated with partial sentences. His voice may crack toward the evening of a long day.

He smiles a lot. In Chicago, where he joined Vice President Nelson Rockefeller and local Republicans for a nationwide closed circuit salute to the President at \$1,000 a plate, Dole's smile was as broad as Carter's.

His speech, carefully drafted by President Ford's committee, was delivered in a stony tone. No upstaging the President on this one. The address, televised to 22 cities across the nation, preceded remarks by the President, who was in Los Angeles with Reagan at his side.

With or without a speech written in the White House, Dole usually speaks as a strong supporter of his presidential running mate. And the statements become a summary of why Bob Dole is running.

"I think by and large we've had a pretty good story to tell the American people about President Ford. President Ford is still the same unpretentious man who came to the White

"That's what this whole thing is all about, my friend," one major campaign officer said.

Shortly after he was selected for the vice-presidential nomination, Dole asked his staff to keep files on all Republican candidates he meets on campaign forays. "That includes GOP officials and fat cat types. He will know basically everything he can about people of significance he meets.

"We try to keep up with every candidate he encounters," an aide says. "That includes GOP officials and fat cat types. He will know basically everything he can about people of significance he meets.

"He's doing a damn good job for Ford but he's helping in his future too," the aide goes on. "Dole's a conservative, but he's never been disliked by the liberal wing of the party. He's not only known, but basically he's liked and he's the type of guy who can unify a party."

Perhaps the most senior veteran on Dole's vice-presidential campaign staff remembers the first publicly spoken reference to Dole as a possible presidential candidate.

That was way back in the spring of 1971, when Dole was at a party fundraiser in Columbia, S.C. Sen. Strom Thurmond's strong and hearty introduction of Dole had the crowd whooping it up, the aide recalled.

Thurmond advised the crowd to keep their eye on Dole, to watch him and study him because, "Someday," Thurmond said, "this man will be President."

"That was the first time either Dole or myself had heard any public reference to the possibility," the aide said.

Has Robert J. Dole — the former Republican national chairman, the Kansas junior senator, a disabled war veteran, the strong advocate of conservatism — changed any since he has been a national candidate?

"I don't think so," he responded to the question in an interview. "You know I thought about that myself yesterday. I think if you're not yourself, people will pick it up. But the real encouragement to me has been the response with young people. We've been on eight campuses now, you know.

"It's just a turnout from a few years ago, which indicates to me young people want to participate. President Ford is quite popular. "But we hope we haven't changed. That's one of his strengths. Once you start considering yourself as anything other than what you really are, you're going to lose."

When Bob Dole wins or loses, he says he will be where he started on his race for the vice presidency last August.

"When it's all over about Nov. 2, we're going to be in Russell, Kan., on election day," he said recently.

"That'll be worldwide news. We've already booked both rooms in the motel."

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