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Bob Dole's Hometown Blooming in Anticipation

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down," she said. "I have to live here."

BUT MOST PEOPLE in Russell give Dole their uncritical and eternal devotion. It is hard to find people who do not share a place in the story of Bob Dole, who do not see in him something of themselves and their town.

The story is legend in Russell, threatening to turn mythic: small-town boy is raised in simple frame house, becomes a star athlete, leaves college to go to war, returns seriously wounded, is forced to give up lifetime dream of becoming a doctor, turns to law and politics, wins 14 straight elections before joining Gerald Ford on losing presidential ticket in 1976.

Most are convinced the story will end happily with his election to the presidency. "I think he'll win," said Dole's brother, Kenneth, an oil lease broker in Russell. "I've never known him not to accomplish what he's set out to do."

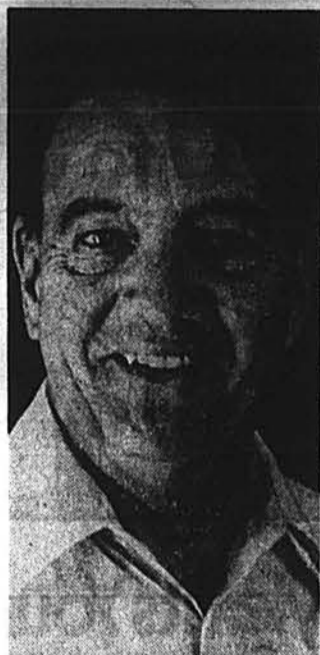
"I think he's the most qualified man in the country," said Bub Dawson, sipping coffee with his brother, Chet, at the counter in Cole and Rogers Dawson Drug Store on Main Street. They used to jerk sodas with Dole when he was in high school, and they come here every morning for coffee.

"THAT'S NOT ONLY us sayin' that," Chet said. "Most everyone in town feels that way. There's no doubt if Bob gets the nomination, he'll be elected."

Chet took a sip. "I'd a hell of a lot rather have him than Carter working in the drug store."

"The only time I seen Bob do anything dumb," Chet continued, "was when we played Lincoln. I told him to watch their end 'cause they'd line up on the sideline and throw it to him for a touchdown. Bob said they'd never do that 'cause it wasn't sportsmanship." But they did it and scored a touchdown.

"I don't remember that," said Bub. "Remember the song he used to play on the jukebox?" Chet asked his brother. "He used to play 'Laughing on the Outside and Crying on the Inside,'" Chet said. "It was after the war."



KENNETH DOLE
... "I think he'll win"



CHET DAWSON HAS KNOWN DOLE ALL HIS LIFE
... Jerked sodas with him during high school days



MRS. BINA DOLE, THE KANSAS SENATOR'S MOTHER
... At her home on Maple Street in Russell

Staff Photos by Dave Williams

ABOUT 6,000 PEOPLE live in Dole's home town, a heavily Republican community rich in oil and agriculture. "I wish they'd quit saying we're a sleepy little town," said Bub Dawson, referring to media reports that usually accompany a Dole visit home. "Russell gets more money in oil in a week than most towns get in a year."

"This is just a typical, small western town," said Jim Boyd, Russell's city manager. "Until something happens. Then it can be quite vociferous."

If it's vociferous, it usually is vociferous in unison. There is seldom any controversy in Russell. Major issues pass or fail overwhelmingly. A swimming pool issue passed 9-1 in November and a water project passed 9-1 in April.

City government officials are practically rooted in office. "I can't recall when an incumbent ever had any opposition," Boyd said.

RUSSELL HAS PRODUCED other stars. Boyd ticked off a few: nationally known bowler Leo Boxberger, a national spelling champion, an Olympic bronze medal winning trapshooter, Philadelphia's district attorney.

When Boyd ran out of people, he phoned Everett Dumluer at the chamber of commerce who supplied more: actress Marj Dusay, television executive Steven Mills, a vice president of Bell Telephone.

Furthermore, Russell's VFW Post has the largest life membership of any post in the entire world, Boyd said. Russell also has the largest municipal diesel plant in Kansas. It operates debt free.

If there's a problem in town, it's a lack of doctors. Three doctors retired last year, prompting bumper stickers that read, "Russell, Kan. Needs Doctors."

The town realizes that there are a few hurdles to be cleared before Bob Dole becomes president, and they downplay the effects his election

would have on Russell. "The people out here don't start counting their chickens before they hatch," Boyd said.

"WE'LL BE MUCH MORE prepared than Plains, Ga.," said Russell Mayor Roger Williams. "I think the town has its feet planted well enough to take it real well."

"We don't have a Billy," Boyd joked.

If Dole is elected, Kenneth Dole apparently will keep a lower profile than Billy Carter. "I think the public has had enough brother business," he said.

"I've got mixed feelings," said Bina Dole, the senator's mother, thinking about her son's expected run at the presidency. "If that's what Bob wants, fine. I'm not going to get all hepped up about it."

Mrs. Dole, 76, sat on a sofa amid piles of family photos in her home on Maple Street, two blocks north across the railroad tracks from where Dole

will make his announcement. The small frame house of Dole's youth has been remodeled and expanded into a trim brick house.

The walls around Mrs. Dole were stripped bare. New wallpaper — white with an embossed eagle design — was being hung for the visit. "I just feel that there's no thanks for what he's going to do," she said. "A president ages. All you have to do is look at the president now. I just think it's a spot where nobody can please anybody. But anything that's a challenge for Bob Dole is what he wants," she sighed. "I'm sure Bob can handle it."

SHE STUDIED THE PHOTOS around her. "Of course, I'm proud of him," she said, "but I've been through so much with Bob, I'm just so happy he's able to live."

"If he wins, he wins," she concluded. "If he doesn't, he doesn't. It's not going to upset me."

Monday has been declared Bob Dole Day by Mayor Williams. "History is going to be made on Monday," he said.

The last Bob Dole Day was Nov. 2, 1976, when Dole came to Russell to cast his ballot in the presidential election. He and Ford had visited Russell that August to kick off their campaign. For that visit, the town had 14 hours to prepare. This time, it had several weeks.

"I'm really impressed with all you've done and all you're doing," Dole advance man Peter Sorum told a group of Russell's leaders gathered at Lettie's Truck Stop to go over final plans.

They discussed the usual details that attend a visit of a prominent figure: bands (a 375-piece band from four county high schools), media arrangements, the sound system, the speaker's stand at the city building (a site chosen, Sorum said, for the way the morning sun would hit Dole's face for the TV cameras), how to handle unfriendly signs (keep them out of sight) and friendly signs (expose them), possible demonstrations and crowd control (stress subtlety on the part of police).

LEADERS OF THE American Agriculture Movement want to bring tractors to town, Sorum was told, not to protest, but to be visible. They'd like to talk to Dole. "My feeling," Sorum responded, "is that this is the most important day in Bob Dole's life, and the most important day in the life of your community. The national press is just cynical enough to take a sidebar event and make a story out of it that would detract from all your work." But, Sorum added, he would meet with AAM leaders.

The sun is expected to shine in Russell Monday. After all, Bob Dole will be home. "I think everybody in town loves him," Chet Dawson said.

"I don't know I've heard anybody say anything bad about Bob Dole," said Bill Nielsen, owner of Nielsen's This 'N That on Main Street.

"I'll stay home Monday," said a retired oil worker as he climbed into his pickup in front of Nielsen's store. He spread his hands. "If Dole hadn't had his nose about that far up Ford's rear end, it'd be a different story," he said. He didn't leave his name.

NEWS RELEASE!

Bill Goodwin
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EMBARGO UNTIL 9:30 A.M. May 14
FOR PM'S OF MAY 14 -79

"Dole Presidential Announcement Speech"

Bob Dole. President.

I thank you all for being with us today. I especially thank the members of the national media who have come so far out of their way to be here. We are very proud of Russell, but we recognize that it is not a major media center. On the other hand, it is very nearly the center of the United States--so those of you who like to be in the middle of things are pretty well situated.

I am announcing today that I shall seek my Party's nomination to the office of President of the United States.

I have no illusions about the magnitude of the undertaking; neither have I any undue concern for the magnitude of the problems associated with it. Financing, logistics, simple human effort or the lack of these may conspire in time to defeat a candidacy, but they cannot deter it at the outset. The magnitude of the endeavor rests not in the institutional necessities which must carry it forward, but rather in the expectations which any candidate must engender and then satisfy in the minds and the hearts of the American people. This is the great task.

It is the task of reasserting a common faith in all that we once set out to be as a nation, a shared confidence in those means established to help us grow and prosper in freedom, and a common conviction that we are in truth what we say we are: a nation that hews to the self-evident truth that "all men are created equal."

Today, in America, no truth is self-evident any longer. Instead, self-doubt increasingly characterizes our public life and our private lives as well.

It is evident in the dwindling numbers of Americans who go to the polls to vote. We say that the franchise is a right--but that alone does not describe it; rather, it reduces its significance. The franchise is a great gift paid for again and again by the courage and sacrifice of previous generations. Yet, today so many of our people ignore it. They doubt that it matters--which is to say they doubt that they have any control over events, over our nation's business, its direction and its destiny.

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