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Undaunted, Dole plods campaign trail

Editor's note: John McCormally, former editor of The Hutchinson News in Kansas and The Burlington Hawk Eye in Iowa, will become Koving Editor for The Harris News Service Jan. 1. His columns and special features will be for the 10 Harris Group newspapers which include The Salina Journal. McCormally currently is visiting with presidential candidates.

By JOHN MCCORMALLY
DES MOINES, Ia. (HNS) — A dogged Bob Dole, dead tired and denying discouragement, slipped and skidded out of a TV studio onto the icy pavement of a bitter winter night.

He'd finished one more of the endless list of interviews the candidates so eagerly seek and was winding up his 24th visit of the year to Iowa. He promised to be back "15 or 20 days" before the crucial caucuses Jan. 21. His wife Elizabeth has already visited 88 Iowa communities.

He had conceded the odds were still long against his election as President of the United States.

"But," he reminded this old acquaintance from Kansas, dark eyes suddenly snapping in the tired face, "you know me. I never give up."

Political speculators are saying Bob Dole will give up — that he'll have to — sometime after Iowa or New Hampshire.

shire. That there won't be the money and organization to go on — unless, of course, he surprises the pundits and pollsters, and makes a respectable showing in those two states.

"Respectable" would be at least third — behind Reagan and Bush — and that means beating Connally and Baker, both of whom have more money, better organization and higher rank in the polls.

Dole still hopes for second place — behind Reagan in Iowa — but concedes "It's more realistic to aim for third."

Staff problems
Dole, whom I've found the most candid of any of the candidates I've interviewed, makes no bones about his difficulties. Eight of his 10 New Hampshire staffers quit last week, along with his national campaign manager and press secretary.

"To be honest, it's tough," he said. "But we're still trying to make it. My Iowa staff has been more stable, and we've added three more this week."

"Money's a problem. I'm not a millionaire like Connally and Bush. I'm employed full time — as a U.S. Senator. I've got a 93 percent voting record and I intend to keep it. I don't have time for fund raising."

"I've been thinking of writing a letter (to his fellow senators Kennedy and Baker) 'Dear Teddy and Howard, wherever you are...'"



Kansas' Bob Dole

That rare glimpse of the old, needing Dole wit is a clue to his current troubles. He's a new Dole, and many people think a nicer one, but the problem with that is that he's harder to identify.

National reporters are still describing him as a man trying to shake an

image as the slasher, the Kansas gun-slinger, the sharp-tongued debater in the '76 campaign. But that's not his problem now. However valid that image was, it's gone and largely forgotten. The trouble is he hasn't found a new one to replace it.

Dole admits he's changed, since he and I used to battle on the editorial page about communism rampant in Western Kansas. "I hope I've grown," he says.

Twenty years ago, he used to delight his constituents by calling the Hutchinson News, biggest paper in his congressional district, "the Prairie Pravda." Among its sins was the suggestion we ought to sell our surplus wheat to China. Dole thought that treason.

Last week, after reminding me he had authored the export bill to help Iowa farmers sell more grain to China, he said without hesitation that he had supported "most-favored-nation status" for the communist giant, so it could more easily buy the grain.

Dole has changed — as has the world, including China. But having hoisted an anchor from his clearly definable, right-wing, rigidly anti-communist stance of old, he is adrift as an only vaguely perceived, moderately progressive Republican who favors trading with communists abroad and expanding the food stamp program at home.

Dole defines himself as the most experienced of GOP candidates, especially in agriculture, which should help in the crucial Iowa caucuses. Yet when pressed for an attention-getting farm issue, all he could come up with was support for expanded exports.

Reagan won't fight

And, having given up the old "Prairie Pravda," bare knuckle style, Dole is left unarmed against his biggest frustration — Ronald Reagan. Dole, like the other GOP hopefuls especially Connally — is driven up the wall by Reagan's refusal to come out and fight.

Connally suggested last week that the other candidates boycott the Republican debates in Des Moines Jan. 5 if Reagan persists in his refusal to participate.

Dole refused last week to say he'd go that far.

"But it is frustrating," he said, alluding to Reagan "sitting on the ranch, issuing statements," while the others go slogging through the cold.

"When are you going to hit him in the head with a two by four, to get his attention," I asked, hoping to strike a spark of the old Dole.

But he demurred. "Well, I don't know. I've tried. I've talked to John Sears, his campaign manager. I've said publicly if you're looking for a

younger Ronald Reagan with experience, here I am. But, I don't know: I guess if you're 40 points ahead of everybody, you can keep a low profile."

"I think Reagan, more than the rest of us, has an obligation to come to Iowa and demolish the rest of us in a debate. If he's the best qualified he ought to show why."

Why, Dole was asked, "don't you come right out and attack Ronald Reagan on his age?"

"I hit his experience," Dole side-stepped. "I think it is a bigger issue than his age."

A far cry from the old slasher. But Dole does insist, "I just don't think Governor Reagan has the experience for the 80s."

When I interviewed him last February, Dole thought Kennedy would be the Democratic candidate. He still does.

"There's been a rapid change in Carter's fortunes," he admits, "but I think it is temporary."

Most observers of the Iowa campaign think Dole's candidacy is temporary. But as he goes out into the icy night in pursuit of the distant goal, he clings to hope.

"Connally could savage Reagan," he says, almost wistfully, "and Baker could do in Bush — and there I'd be..."

The Topeka Daily Capital Viewpoints

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In God We Trust

The Washington Star

Founded in 1852
MURRAY J. GALT, Editor
WILLIAM J. HARRIS, Deputy Editor
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1979

James J. Kilpatrick

Bob Dole and Diogenes

Diogenes, it is reported, walked incessantly through ancient Greece, lantern in hand. He was looking in vain for an honest man. The old philosopher would have had a tough time on the American campaign trail, but his search might at last have been crowned with success. Bob Dole is his kind of guy.

The senior senator from Kansas, vice presidential nominee with Gerald Ford three years ago, is running for the Republican nomination. At least he is jogging for it. In most of the polls he ranks two points behind None of the Above. His campaign isn't broke, exactly, but next month it will qualify for food stamps.

At this point does he have any realistic hope of winning? "No," he says. Hey, Diogenes! Bring your lantern over here.

It's much too early to venture certain predictions on which of the candidates will win the most votes. It's not at all difficult to say who will have the most fun. Dole takes politics seriously, but not too damned seriously. If wit and candor alone would win delegates, he could head for Detroit next summer with a bagful.

Dole had breakfast one morning last week with a dozen senior correspondents. It was an altogether happy way to start a day. The senator talked soberly about the situation in Iran; he was disappointed that our allies had not been more supportive. He spoke with an insid-

er's certain knowledge of arms limitation and energy. He reviewed the bill he has sponsored with Danforth of Missouri and Domenici of New Mexico to underwrite insurance against catastrophic illnesses.

Dole is much more than the Bob Hope of the GOP, a master of the one-liner. But he is in fact a genuinely funny man. He took off wryly on the inexperience of Ronald Reagan and John Connally in terms of current issues. "They never make speeches outside on a windy day," he observed. "If they drop their notes, where are they?"

One of the reporters asked Dole if Reagan, at 68, is too old for the race. "The rest of us would never on earth make an issue of it," he said. "Of course, we are planning a big birthday party for him in February. There'll be a cake with 69 candles."

Was there much political hay to be harvested on the SALT II treaty? After all, a reporter remarked, a nationwide poll found that only 36 percent of the people even knew it was a treaty between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. "I thought that was a poll of the Senate," Dole interjected.

The senator had a further thought about public perception of the presidential race. On the night that CBS correspondent Roger Mudd was dissecting Edward Kennedy, most of the TV audience was tuned to an old movie. "Sixty-three per-

cent of the people were watching Jaws, 12 percent were watching Mudd, and 25 percent couldn't tell the difference."

Dole acknowledged that he was having problems within his own campaign organization. A reporter remarked upon the heavy turnover. "Why," chided Dole, "four key people have left and four others have come in — but I wouldn't call that turnover." What was the status of a key aide in the Midwest? Dole didn't know. "He quits a lot," he said. Where was the aide at this very moment? Dole couldn't say. "He hasn't written home in some time."

The conversation got back to Reagan, for whom Dole had muted praise. In the 1976 campaign, he recalled, the California governor had been more helpful than the Ford people would admit. "Of course," said Dole, "four key people have left and four others have come in — but I wouldn't call that turnover." What was the status of a key aide in the Midwest? Dole didn't know. "He quits a lot," he said. Where was the aide at this very moment? Dole couldn't say. "He hasn't written home in some time."

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Dole would have pleased Diogenes

By JAMES J. KILPATRICK

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Bob Dole and the Kansas Primary

By AL POLCZINSKI
Political Writer

When Kansas legislators drafted the state's first presidential preference primary law, they didn't do Sen. Bob Dole any favors.

For one thing, the proportional rule that divides the state's 32 delegates to the GOP National Convention among the various candidates according to their percentage of the total vote diluted his chance of winning a "favorite son" delegation.

For another, the Feb. 12 deadline for candidates to file for the presidential primary is far from the best timing for the senior senator.

Dole has said that his hopes of winning the nomination rest on the acceptance by the 1980 voters of the party's number one challenger in 1976 — Ronald Reagan.

But Dole and the rest of the country will not have any idea how well Reagan is being accepted until the results of several primaries are in.

BY FEB. 12, the only meaningful tests the candidates will have encountered will have been the Iowa caucuses on Jan. 21. Even the Puerto Rican Republican primary, with 14 delegate votes at stake, is not until Feb. 17. The battle for New Hampshire's 22 delegates isn't over until Feb. 26.

Dole already has said he will enter the Kansas primary which falls on April 1. So he has committed himself although he hasn't filed with the Secretary of State's office.

By April 1, there will have been 11 Republican primaries — in Puerto Rico, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Connecticut and New York. Wisconsin will have a primary the same day as Kansas.

Those 11 primaries will send 496 — roughly one-third of the total — to the GOP convention in Detroit.

IF REAGAN IS DOING well, Dole apparently figures he is out in the cold. If Reagan is doing badly and Dole is not getting the fall-out, Dole again figures to be out in the cold. Only if Reagan is faring badly and Dole is among the top three contenders — with none having the nom-

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IF REAGAN IS DOING well, Dole apparently figures he is out in the cold. If Reagan is doing badly and Dole is not getting the fall-out, Dole again figures to be out in the cold. Only if Reagan is faring badly and Dole is among the top three contenders — with none having the nom-

ination sewn up — can the Kansas senator be said to be in a good position for the top prize.

It could be that by April 1 Dole will wish his name was not on the presidential primary ballot.

If by that date he will have withdrawn from the presidential race, he might prefer to receive no votes in the state primary than to get an embarrassingly low vote.

But once a candidate has filed for the presidential primary, there is no provision in state law for removing a name from the ballot.

As one Dole campaign leader said recently, "That may be the first election Dole will have to ask people not to vote for him."

THIS IS THE KIND of thinking prompting Republicans to say they wish Dole would quit fiddling around in the presidential race now and concentrate on a Senate re-election race.

Dole isn't listening to that kind of advice. The past week his campaign staff was opening an office in Illinois in hopes of influencing the selection of 102 delegates there on March 18.

He also was in Florida Saturday for the straw voting at the GOP state convention. He wasn't making the big splash the party's high rollers were but he planned to have an elephant with a Dole banner on it present.

Florida chooses its 51 delegates on March 11.

As Dole says, he doesn't discourage easily.