This document is from the collections at the Dole Archives, University of Kansas.

The Faith to Endure

ESTREP.

radioman, not knowing that it no longer matters how many more times he may be hit

On the right, the 3rd Platoon is movhis mouth kicked shut upon it, the other ing. There is a farmhouse on the flank tag sent up for the records. of 913, and Sergeant Sanford Rague has In his shell hole Dole has administered gone to it, negotiating a minefield along the way. He is hit from the farmhouse all he can do. Overhead the firing from as he comes beneath its windows and the hill stops. When it begins again, if plops a grenade inside. So now Rague it begins again, it may find them in their shell holes. No one believes lightning is bleeding on the far side of a minefield. and a private named Smith whom no one doesn't strike twice in the same place. previously suspected of ruthlessness takes So now Dole comes up again, out intwo German prisoners and orders them to the clearing, moving on the unseen across the minefield. German prisoners positions. are often cocky, knowing they are out The iron rain begins, and somethinga mortar round perhaps, one medical

of battle and safe while their captors must still face death. These prisoners are not cocky. They plead, "Nein, nein. Minen! Minen!" as though the American does not understand what he is asking them to do. Smith makes it clear that he will shoot them, so they begin across the minefield and both explode mines and are killed. Smith takes a ladder, lays it on the two German bodies, totters across and retrieves Rague.

There is a sniper 50 yards to the front. midway up the hill, and Sergeant Bill Skinner of the weapons platoon takes a mortar up in front of the hedgerow and fires it. He is shot in the forehead, but record says an explosive shell, Nencioni his round drops on the sniper. Al Nenthinks it could have been a bullet, and

cioni goes forward to peek at his friend. Skinner, and knows that he is dead. "Their snipers were good. There were a lot of head shots. That was a bad day. It was worse than Belvedere." Asked why the shoulder. beginning of the spring offensive was worse than the taking of Mount Belvedere, he says that they lost more men on this day. "But it wasn't that. Belvedere mand as platoon sergeant, now has a was at night. You couldn't see what happened to your friends so much at night." Now Nencioni has one more hour to come behind. It is a practical order to

see what is happening to his friends. Then conserve manpower in a unit that takes a large mortar round will go off a little too close to him.

Company "1" is to take Hill 913 and continue three miles beyond it. By nightfall they will have gone only a thousand yards, but they will have reached the summit. The resistance is everything the they got before they died. I couldn't just Führer could have hoped, except successful. Nor is it unusual that day for the gave him some morphine, and I told Armen of this American unit to have to be driven forward by the curses and kicks we weren't supposed to have morphine. and rifle butts and bayonets of their non- But the Germans would shoot our medcommissioned officers. "We thought, ics. They didn't care about the Geneva the way they wiped that mountain, we Convention. Se we had to make do a lot. wouldn't have any resistance at all," Nencioni says, recalling the bombing and artillery fire. "But they were there, dug guys got hit, we could help them a little. in." The 10th Division that day will take You dipped your finger in his blood and more casualties than all other Allied forces put an 'M' on his forehead, because we The Washingtonian/December 1982

in Italy combined, and men will become had to leave them and when somebody inured to it. Dev Jennings will catch a got to them to take care of them they'd few hours of sleep that night wrapped in see the 'M' and not give him more morphine. So he wouldn't overdose, see? a mattress cover, and wake up screaming "So we gave the Lieutenant the moras men from Graves Registration begin phine and left McBryar. I figured McBryar to haul him up to be numbered, one notched dog tag between his front teeth, wouldn't have to wait long.

The Allied invasion of Italy had begun on September 3, 1943. Its objectives were morphine to his radioman because it is not entirely military, but political as well, involving the prestige of the British Empire, then defended by Winston Churchill. Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower agreed that Italy should be invaded (Army Chief of Staff George Marshall did not), but he could have contented himself with taking the strategic airfields at Foggia, just north of the heel of the Italian boot, then using Allied airpower against southern Europe.

Churchill had a different idea. Planning for the cross-channel invasion of Normandy was in full swing, and the United States was determined that no men or equipment should be diverted for a major Italian campaign. Churchill was equally determined that British forces in the Mediterranean were not going to sit out the last half of 1943 and the first of 1944 waiting for the attack on France. The plan to go into Naples, called 'Avalanche,'' went forward. On September 3, a combined US-Brit-

ish force landed at Reggio on the toe of Italy. On that same day an armistice covertly negotiated with the new Italian so does Kuschick; you think these things government was signed. Five days later can be determined with precision, but they can't-something full of orangeanother combined force steamed toward brown-black noise explodes Dole's right Salerno on the coast south of Naples, and the armistice was announced. That Behind them, the 2nd Platoon continthe Allies were no longer at war with the ues to pour fire across the hedgerow and nation that they now invaded was no more than a mournful coincidence. Germany into the hill. Kuschick, second in comprepared to reinforce Italy and to take the deposed Mussolini and re-establish problem. They have been ordered to leave him as the head of the Fascist governtheir wounded to await the medics who ment. This was done as the Allies were trying to fight their way out of the Saso many casualties that if one man is left lerno beachhead. On the 15th, the Gerto guard and comfort another who has man General Kesselring pulled back and been wounded, then there might be none Salerno was secured. The Allies were left to move forward. Kuschick decides irrevocably on Italian soil.

On October 8, 1943, Churchill cabled Roosevelt: "... we cannot yet tell whether it is in October or November "The Lieutenant was gray, the way leave him there to die by himself. We that we can occupy Rome; but it is certain that we shall not come in contact with the main German forces at the top of the thur McBryar to stay with him. You know, leg till December, or even later. . . It was even later, for Hitler resolved to stand south of Rome and charge dearly for any inch of ground, so that the Allied conquest of Rome did not come until When we came across a dead medic, we'd take his morphine. Then when our June 5, 1944, and by then its luster had been dimmed by its terrible cost. There was more to come

As the price of Italy went up, Private

Robert Joseph Dole, 17179287, was being forces trained to fight in winter weather factored into the US military establishment. On December 14, 1942, his parents, Doran and Bina Dole, swore before a notary in Russell, Kansas, that they "the undersigned, being the father and mother of Robert Joseph Dole, a minor, an applicant for enlistment in the United States Army, do hereby give our consent to his enlistment therein." The next day he was enlisted at Lawrence, Kansas. He was finally called to active duty on June 1, 1943. The records show that he was a trainee in the Army Medical Corps from June until November of 1943, and that he was then placed in the Army Specialized Training Program for engineering studies until March of 1944. This took him to Brooklyn College, where he compiled a short academic record. The

They have been ordered to leave their wounded to await the medics who come behind. . . . Kuschick decides to disobey this order.

pleted, Dole now became a gunner in an anti-tank company of the 290th Infantry at Fort Breckenridge, Kentucky. At Breckenridge, on June 15, Dole applied for Officer Candidate School.

He was sent to Fort Benning for officer training. The physical required showed that he was a large, healthy 20-year-old: six feet two inches tall, 186 pounds.

During the same period, the 87th Infantry Mountain Regiment was being shot at on the Aleutian Island of Kiska, where it was landed along with some 30,000 other men with the mission of retrieving this bit of American soil from the 6,000 Japanese forces planted there. Before they arrived, the Japanese were quietly evacuated and the fresh, frightened American troops went ashore, spread out in a dense fog. They began firing at any noise, killing and wounding a number of their own people

This inglorious episode was not consistent with the expectations of those who had labored to make mountain troops a part of the US armed forces. Chief among those was Charles Minot Dole (not related to Robert Dole), a skiing enthusiast who had founded the National Ski Patrol System. In 1940, "Minnie" Dole and

or mountainous terrain The Secretary of War was offered the services of the National Ski Association in preparing to defend the Northeast. He was not interested. But winter sports were still largely the province of the rich, and the rich were well-connected. Soon the National Ski Patrol found

itself advising the military on how to equip and train troops for the kind of role they might have to perform in the northeastern United States, or in the mountains of Europe. In November 1941, the 1st Battalion.

87th Infantry Mountain Regiment, was activated at Fort Harris, Washington. The Army now had a paper unit, but they hadn't the personnel to man it. So the National Ski Association became the remedical and engineering training comcruiting agency for the 87th Infantry Mountain Regiment. They were a discriminating agency. Those wishing to join up had to provide letters of recommendation. The result was that the 87th and its spawn, the 85th and 86th Infantry Mountain Regiments-one day to be the 10th Mountain Division-were composed of men rarely found in the Army.

> schools. Through the summer and winter of 1943, the mountain regiments trained while wars in the Atlantic and Pacific

> Many were graduates of Ivy League

went forward. The one exception was the embarrassing adventure of the 87th on Kiska. It began to appear that those who had opposed the formation of the elite unit-and there were many, for the military has a traditional hostility to elite units-had had their revenge. The mountain men might be good, and they might be valuable. But no one would ever know because they had never been tested.

Then came Monte Cassino. Mountain troops, George Marshall realized, would have been valuable at Monte Cassino. In October, Marshall toured the European Theater of Operations and chanced upon a colleague, General George P. Hays, commanding the 2nd Division's artillery in the Ardennes Forest. Marshall thought the job beneath Hays, whose military exploits had included winning a Congresssional Medal of Honor in World War I by dancing his horse through a German artillery barrage, calmly iden-

tifying targets for his own gunners. Marshall brought Hays back to the States and put him in charge of the mountain regiments, now coalesced into the 10th Mountain Division. In November the Division received orders to go to Italy.

While the 10th was sailing for Italy, Bob Dole was already there, assigned to the some of his friends had suggested that a 24th Replacement Depot as a pool of-German attack on America could come ficer. Winter action was limited, and so from the Northeast and encounter no US were Dole's duties.



Dole was near death several times before he had the final operationin November 1947-which gave him 40 percent use of his right arm. By then, it had been 39 months since Operation Craftsman and the taking of Hill 913.

"I thought that Replacement Depot was the best duty you could have. I remember going to Rome. They had a big sports school in Rome. I figured the best way to get out of that Army over there was to get in the sports school." Dole laughs, almost wistfully. "Never could figure out how to do it. All those athletes running around the Coliseum there in Rome, getting in shape for the games. His voice trails off. Dole has no problem admitting that he never went in search of something dangerous to do.

On February 25, 1945, he was assigned to "I" Company, 3rd Battalion, 85th Mountain Regiment. The unit morning report recording this routine personnel action gives an account of the day: "Company in defense. Weather fair and warm. General thawing out. Morale very good.

One week earlier, the 10th Mountain Division had assaulted and taken Riva Ridge and Monte Belvedere-Monte Torracio Ridge, opening the way for an attack on Bologna and the Po Valley. The Allies had attempted this three times before. On one occasion, Belvedere had been held for three days, but the Germans took it back. The 10th Mountain took it and kept it, against the fortifications and firepower of the Germans on the heights, against the Germans' desperate knowledge of what could pour through this bottleneck. A radio message December 1982 The Washingtonian

oism; yet being wounded is almost alfrom Hays catches the urgency with which he drove his troops: "Recall 6 to Reways an accident. Why people get medbate 5: General does not want to hear of als for it is a mystery. Heroism involves anyone stopping. Send patrol over to break choices, and Dole perceived no choice between leading his men and not leading through and to hell with this business of them. For six weeks he was in the war being surrounded." and showed himself worthy of one of the The Division took more than 900 ca-

sualties, 203 dead. When it was over, best units and was hit. He seems to have met the high expectations of those he led. the reputation of the 10th Mountain Di-What it meant to him then or now is not vision was made. At the time Dole joined it, "1" Com-

lot of them didn't listen."

sergeants.

in front.

it was.

began.

German grenade fragments.

like a sissy. He didn't wear a helmet, he

wore one of those cloth hats to keep his

head warm. And I remember he didn't

blouse his pants over his boots. I don't

clear. pany was in defensive positions. Dole He returned to Italy years later to try to find the hill where he was on April had not been there when the unit was blooded. To the men of the 2nd Pla-14, 1945, but the land was strange to him. In recent years he has attended an toon he was just another lieutenant. occasional reunion of men from the 10th and the Division was quickly using up licutenants.

Mountain Division, but he doesn't re-'When he got up there, we'd been member many, nor does he maintain contact with them. The unit's archivist, pretty busy and we were dirty. I don't know what he thought of us," Kuschick says. "We were both about the same age, but I had not shaved, had a beard,

For Bob Dole, it was just and I must have looked older or something, because he was very respectful. bad luck. He did not He asked questions and he listened. A begin with these men; Al Nencioni says: "At first, he looked

The 10th Division that day

will take more casualties

than all other

Allied forces in Italy

combined, and men

will become inured to it.

to disobey this order.

he came to them by chance, and long afterward he suffered for it.

know why-just wrapped them tight around his legs and laced his boots around Andy Hastings, says, "For a long time Bob didn't identify himself with us. He them. He looked funny. A lot of guys who looked like sissies had more guts just felt like he didn't belong." There is than the others, though-the John Wayne nothing that would lead one to believe types. And he always listened to the now that he shares with them a sense of belonging. Out of it all, it is this that 'We had two battles going," Kuschick says. "One with the Germans and most sets Dole apart from his comrades. one with the officers. A lot of them weren't Read Henry's exhortation at Agincourt to them, and they will understand it in their worth much. Dole was the best combat

stomachs. Every generation of soldiers leader the platoon had. If he had to take has its St. Crispin's Day. Tennyson's a farmhouse, he went right for it. Never "Ulysses" will touch the same scars that told somebody else to do it. He stayed these men intentionally keep open so as On March 18, Dole took a patrol out never to forget. Men may pray for peace and brotherhood, but they will settle for to try to capture some Germans. It is the the brotherhood they've known at war. first record of Dole in action. They came They are grateful to have known it. under fire, and he, along with three of

For Bob Dole, it was just bad luck. his men, was lightly wounded by gre-He did not begin with these men; he came nade fragments. These may not have been to them by chance, and long afterward he suffered for it. While Manninen and "I think one of ours might have

Jennings were competing for Olympic bounced off a tree and rolled back." Dole medals in 1948, Dole was being released says. "Sometimes it was like a shooting gallery in the dark. You didn't know from a hospital, and even that was not where the stuff was coming from or whose the end of it. Dole had lain in the shell hole with

McBryar for what seemed like an eternity. The medics who should have come On April 14, the spring offensive began. to help him had themselves been hit by Dole was hit less than one hour after it German fire, and it was nine hours before Whatever justifies the recollection that Dole arrived by litter at the 15th Evacuation Hospital, where the consensus was he was the best combat leader the 2nd

that he would die. Whatever had hit him Platoon had remains locked in the memhad damaged his spine: "The patient had ories of men who shared an experience immediate paralysis complete of all four a long time ago. Inevitably, a war wound extremities invests the bearer with an aura of her-

Two days later he was transferred to the 70th General Hospital in Casablanca.

The letters began to come in to the little house at 1035 Maple Street, Russell, Kansas. Because Dole could not use his hands, the letters were written for him. April 25, 1945

Dear Mom and Dad.

Just writing to let you know I'm feeling O.K. I can move my legs now but I'm still having a little trouble with my left arm. I have a broken bone in my right arm and two in the shoulder. I guess some German thought I was a good target.

Write and let me know all the news. Tell me how Kenny is getting along in the Army. Tell everyone hello and to write. I'll let you hear from me as often as possible. Please don't worry about me. I may be home for my birthday.

> Love. Bob April 27, 1945

Dear Mom and Dad. I'm feeling pretty good today. I'm just a little nervous and restless, but I'll be okay before long. I'm getting so I can move my right arm a little and I can also move my legs. I seem to be improving every day and there isn't any reason why I shouldn't be as good as new before long. Send me something to read and

something to eat. Love. Bob

April 27, 1945

Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Dole: I'm sure you know that Robert is unable to write so I tried to write him a note. He told me what to write. I know you are worrying about Robert but I wouldn't worry too much be-

cause there isn't any doubt in my mind at all but what he will be just as good a man when he gets well as he was before he was hurt. Just thank God it wasn't any worse than it was. That's the way I feel about it. In case you want to know who I am, my name is John Booth of Bethany, Mo. Robert was my Platoon Leader. He is a fine fellow. I'll write again for him. (A sniper shot me in the foot. I can't walk very well but it

won't be long until I can.) As always. John

May 23, 1945 Dear Mom and Dad.

I haven't written in a couple of weeks, primarily because I thought I'd be home by this time. I'm in a Now the strapping boy who had brought the trophies home to Russell was home again, and there were few who had the voice to give him welcome. He weighed 120 pounds, excluding his cast.

different hospital now and I should be going home soon. Am feeling much better than I was when my last letter was written. My legs are better and my left arm seems to be improving steadily.

The cast I'm in is none too comfortable but as soon as I reach home, it will be taken off. There is a possibility that I will be sent to Winter General Hospital in Topeka. Love.

Bob P.S. I don't know who wrote this.

The war in Europe ended May 8, 1945. On June 12, Dole was admitted to Winter General Hospital in Topeka, Kansas. Shortly, the Doles arranged a leave for their son and brought him home on the train. His townspeople were there to see him borne down among them on a stretcher.

Dole was now 22 years old, having been born in Russell on July 20, 1923, eldest of the four children of Doran R. and Bina Dole. Doran Dole ran a creamand-egg business, and sold feed and other rural sundries. Mrs. Dole sold Singer sewing machines and vacuum cleaners. The children sold Cloverine Salve and the Salina Journal, mowed lawns, and had chores. The proceeds helped to pay for their schoolbooks and clothing. In a place where constancy was a necessary virtue, Doran Dole gained a homey fame by missing one day of work in 40 years. The boys were active in the Boy Scouts, the family active in the Methodist Church. All four children attended Russell Ele-

mentary School. Dole's third-grade teacher remembered him: "Bobby Dole was unforgettable. He had big, brown eyes-warm and sensitive. When I looked into the room, across the little faces, I was always aware of Bobby. He studied his lessons and he enjoyed coming up with the answers to questions. He stood by his desk like a little soldier.'

Even in his youth there was a fidelity to duty. A family story recalls an occasion when Bina Dole was ill. "Dad was in charge of us kids." said Dole's

and immediately went about waking everyone up. We protested, but Dad would hear none of that. Then, while we were sitting at the color. Soon he lay near death. His mother table waiting for breakfast-and none of was told he might have a few hours to us hungry-Dad sent Bob to the drug- live. His temperature reached an imstore to get something for him.

"After Bob left, Dad finally looked at the clock and saw it was only 3 AM. standing catheterization, results in kid-When Bob didn't come back right away, ney infection and kidney stones: "Ex-Dad sent the rest of us back to bed and tensive workup was done and it was found went down to the drugstore. There was that the right kidney was markedly in-Bob, sitting in the darkened door of the fected and contained a large number of drugstore half-asleep, determined to wait stones. This necessitated removal of the until it opened."

and outgoing, and Dole recalled, "Many ment in the left upper extremity. customers who traded there came just to owner. It took a year to pay it off.

work at the drugstore enabled him to way-tentatively, but with the determeet the local doctors, and he developed mination to learn." an ambition for a medical career.

pany, and his body hardened further. Becoach, Phog Allen. Allen was told of the thing with my hands." and making the all-conference teams.

and basketball, and in track nearly broke the indoor record for the guarter-mile. Most of his time was spent on his back. the indoor record for the quarter-mile. But there was a war, and Dole had al-

again, and there were few who had the voice to give him welcome. He weighed 120 pounds, excluding his cast.

The "instrumentality of war" that broke agent that made him, temporarily, hebone, the scapula, which is the large , was uncertain he would live. shoulder bone behind the collarbone, the humerus, which is the upper arm, and

fractured, and the vertebra tilted out of

sister, Gloria. "One morning he popped line, shocking the spinal cord, paralyz-out of bed without looking at the clock ing all four extremities, and taking away normal bowel and bladder functions. Dole went back to Winter General with a few additional pounds and improved probable 108.7 degrees.

The loss of bladder function, notwithkidney on 11 July 1945. The patient had Dole went to work there at Dawson's an uneventful recovery from his kidney Drugstore when he was twelve. He condition. By September 1945, the paworked after school, evenings, Satur- tient had regained function of his bladder days, and Sundays after church. The and bowels as well as function in both Dawsons had three sons, all quick-witted lower extremities with some improve-

Autumn, and to be able to stand alone be 'insulted' by the Dawson brothers. It was a great achievement. Bina Dole had was natural that I would pick up some taken an apartment close by the hospital of this." He bought the family a \$26 and helped him each day. "Bob had bicycle for \$2 and services to the store learned to walk as a baby when he was between ten and eleven months old. At As he grew older he developed a pas- Winter General I watched a nurse get sion for sports, and he trained hard. His him up out of bed. He walked the same

He had begun to smoke, and she held In high school he became president of his cigarettes for him because his arms Hi-Y and a member of the National Honor didn't work. He was still given slight Society. His last summer in high school chance of recovery, and occasionally ache worked for the Kaw Pipeline Com- knowledged this. And if he lived, what? "To be completely helpless has a marked fore he left the drugstore he'd met the effect on anyone," he says. "I couldn't son of Kansas University's basketball feed myself for almost a year, or do any-

young man who ran everywhere he went, By late fall he could take a few steps training all the time, lifting weights, doing and move his left arm. He could manipcalisthenics, winning letters three years ulate his left hand a little. In November running in football, basketball, and track, he was transferred to Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, Dole enrolled at Kansas University as away from his home and parents and a pre-medical student, played football friends. But his progress encouraged him

When a patient is incapacitated, bedded ready joined the reserves. Finally, he for long periods, the blood slows in the body. This slowing leads to clotting.

asked to be placed on active duty. Now the strapping boy who had brought the trophies home to Russell was home It was diagnosed as a pulmonary infarct-an obstruction in the lung. The obstruction was a blood clot. He was treated with dicumarol, an anti-clotting

him had entered his right shoulder, frac-turing the clavicle, which is the collar-

The dicumarol was continued. There was no other treatment available at the penetrated to the fourth cervical verte- time. For long periods Dole's body was bra. The bony top of this vertebra was packed with ice. The year ended, the days oozed into weeks, and the weeks The Washingtonian/December 1982

The Washingtoman December 1982

