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America's Power Couple

Sen. Robert and cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Dole share romance and Republicanism in the Capital.

Bob and Elizabeth Dole were lounging with the Sunday papers in the living room of their Watergate apartment when a familiar headline—DOLE SAYS—caught the senator's eye. "What's this?" he puzzled. "I never said that at all. That's not my position." His wife glanced over and scanned the story. "Well, it's not yours," she agreed. "But it's mine."

Welcome to life with the Senator and The Secretary (subtitle: witty small-town Kansans war hero and brainy North Carolina ex-

marriages has in the Doles a new standard—two top-ranking public officials, one elected and one appointed, who have independently achieved roughly equal stature. Perhaps the truest measure of the impact of Washington's consensus "power couple" is the surfeit of Dole jokes making the rounds at Georgetown dinner parties. There's the one about how their marriage violates federal anti-merger laws. And the one about how their political enemies end up with no tax loopholes—but lots of potholes. But the most telling humor on the subject comes from Dole himself, who vies with Arizona Congressman Morris K. Udall and comedian Mark Russell for the unofficial title of funniest man in Washington. At last spring's Gridiron Dinner, the senator told assembled political and media heavies, "I'm happy to be here with the country's second most powerful couple—Ron and Nancy Reagan."

Frozen Fish At home, being the power couple is somewhat less than glamorous. After almost eight years of marriage, the Doles haven't found time for house hunting, and they still live in Bob's bachelor duplex amid his-and-hers furniture. On those few nights a week when their schedules and 12-hour workdays permit it, whichever Dole gets home first puts the frozen fish in the oven; the other Dole cleans up.

Robert Dole's ease with this "liberated" life-style is somewhat unusual given his generation, background and conservative politics—but it is not a recent transformation. His first wife, Phyllis Buzick, they divorced in 1972 after 23 years of marriage—didn't give up her career until Dole was elected to Congress in 1960. (She says, "He would much rather I'd gone out and got a job.") Dole sees no problems in being married now to someone whose workaholic tendencies rival his own. "The problems in some of these marriages come when you have one spouse who is home every night at 5 o'clock and the other is never home until 7, 8, 9 o'clock," he says. "But when you're sort of on the same track, I never really worry about it." In fact, Dole regards the whole power-couple business with studied nonchalance. "She has her career, I have my career and we have our career," he says, "whatever that is."

Among other things, it is a joint career



The Doles: A new standard for two-career marriages

May Queen share romance and Republicanism in the nation's Capital. Sound like an ABC sitcom? Actually, as played out in Washington's political stage, it's a far classier act—something akin to Tracy and Hepburn. The Senator, Robert J. Dole, 60, senior senator from Kansas and chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, his legislative domain extends over taxes, social security, Medicaid and other programs and issues that affect the lives of all Americans. The Secretary, Elizabeth (Liddy) Hanford Dole, 47, Harvard Law School-trained secretary of transportation, she oversees 62,500 employees and a \$27 billion budget and is the first woman ever to head a branch of the U.S. armed forces—the Coast Guard.

The growing phenomenon of two-career

to get axed at the White House, I pass them along," he says. "Who's thought to be axed?" The Doles insist they don't find it difficult to "compartmentalize" their professional and private lives—or to keep secrets that it would be "inappropriate" to share. When the senator helped hammer out the 1983 budget compromise, he says he kept all deliberations from his wife. In turn, she even promised White House aides not to tell her husband about her cabinet appointment to preserve the presidential scoop.

Still, some White House aides are wary of the Doles' working relationship, particularly since the senator drafted a women's equity bill to eliminate sex discrimination in federal laws that stole the thunder from a Reagan administration task force working on a similar proposal. "Pillow talk has been known to do wonders," says one. And the Doles themselves recognize that conflicts of interest could arise. Bob says that he would probably vote with the secretary on transportation matters—unless his wife's interests and those of Kansas were at odds.

That was the case in 1978 when Elizabeth, then a member of the Federal Trade Commission, ruled against territorial restrictions on independent bottlers. Congress overturned her decision—and Senator Dole voted with the majority. "I think she was right but I voted against her because of constituent pressure," he says. In 1977, when Elizabeth supported the creation of a strong consumer-advocate agency and Bob opposed it, the couple sparred in a public debate. "I'll be in so much hot water tonight," he joked. "They'll be able to name a tea bag after me."

Blotter. Actually, it was consumerism that brought Bob Dole and Elizabeth Hanford together. As deputy director of the Office of Consumer Affairs in the Nixon White House, she visited Dole's Senate office to lobby for a consumer plank in the 1972 Republican platform. "When he walked through the door," she recalls, "I just looked up and thought, 'My goodness, he's an attractive man.'" The senator must have thought something similar, since he remembers scribbling her name on the desk blotter.

But he didn't call her for months, and for a long time their relationship was chaperoned by Ma Bell. They had several long phone conversations that revealed a number of common friends, interests and notions, but which always ended with Bob saying, "Nice talking to you," and hanging up. Dole was reluctant to ask her out because of the 13-year difference in their ages. "I was just a small-town boy from Kansas where you married people your own age," he says. "It was sort of a little mental cliff I had to jump over."

But Dole finally leaped and invited her out to dinner. "I don't know what love at first sight is," Elizabeth says, "but I think we were really interested in each other."

The senator was not alone in his interest. He found himself thrust into what he calls "a Kentucky Derby" of suitors competing for one of Washington's most eligible women. For perhaps the only time in his life, Dole

allowed himself to be distracted from political matters, he didn't return to Kansas early or often enough for his 1974 re-election campaign and barely squeaked through with a 13,000-vote plurality.

He has not made that mistake again, earning a reputation as one of the Senate's most relentless campaigners. When Nancy Kassebaum, now his colleague from Kansas, asked Dole for help in the closing days of her 1978 Senate race, the senator changed around the state for three days. After one full day's appearances, with several to go, he called Kassebaum to wish her luck and was surprised to find that she'd been home for hours and was watching TV. When his wife planned a late-summer vacation in Hawaii, the senator wanted to join in San Diego and Honolulu to shake hands with a few



They are a hell of a one-two punch in this town: Double-Dole destiny?

local Republicans. "You never know," he explains. "They may be delegates later on." There is a price for such single-mindedness. Wohlford, now a Wichita attorney, recalls Dole telling him, "When I was in the House, I did everything. I answered every phone call, I personally wrote back to every constituent. And you know what it got me? A divorce!" Today, the Doles take pains to make time for each other. They share the dinner-party circuit for meals alone on trays in front of the TV. Last July Elizabeth flew to Topeka, where the senator was campaigning, to throw him a surprise birthday party complete with Miss Kansas popping out of a box. During the four nights a week when one or both of them is traveling, they speak by phone regularly and Bob often sends roses with a note saying "I miss you."

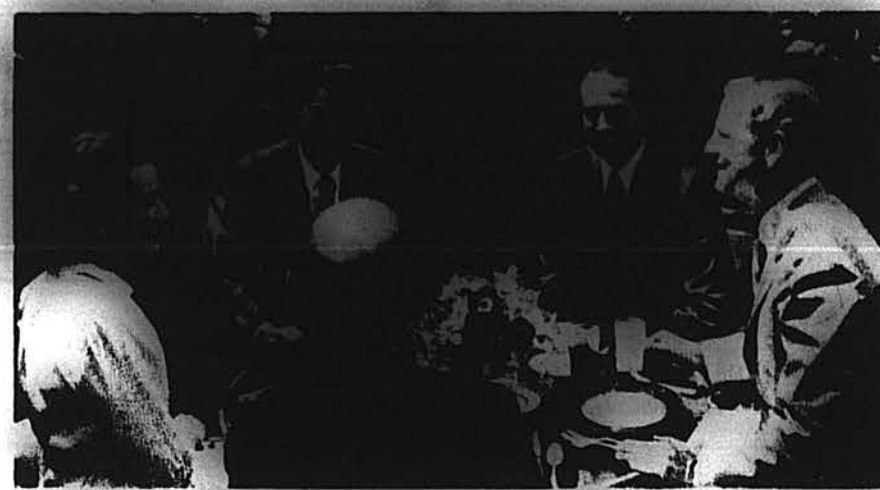
Dole doesn't like to talk about his feelings. "I figure if you don't worry over problems,

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

most of them will just go away," the senator says. Elizabeth, who by contrast is big on "communication," suspects that her husband's emotional self-sufficiency is a legacy of the 39 months he spent hospitalized after he was wounded—leaving him with a crippled arm—leading his platoon across Italy's Po Valley during World War II. She remembers being stunned by his reaction—or lack of one—to his narrow loss of the vice presidency in 1976. "The next day he just said, 'OK, we didn't make it, and that was it.' Dole shrugs his shoulders as if he can't imagine what men she expected. "You just sort of come home at 3 o'clock in the morning, and the Secret Service drives off, and that's the end of it. You're Joe Blow again."

Some political prognosticators believe Dole may one day be tested by a far more uncommon political experience. Though the senator is considered one of the leading candidates for the post-Reagan GOP presidential nomination, many regard his wife as an even hotter political prospect. She says she has already been approached about running for Congress or governor in North Carolina, and her name is near the top of virtually every list of likely first woman vice-presidential candidates. Elizabeth will only say that elective office "might at some point in my life be an option." But she is certain that her husband could adjust to being No. 2. "Well," he says, looking slightly pained at the thought, "one and a half, maybe."

MARKET NEWS AND MARKET TRENDS BY GORDON L. WATSON, WASHINGTON, AND MARY ELLEN BROWN, IN KANSAS



Dining with the president and aides: Usually, dinner for two in front of the television

that could go a good deal further. "The Doles are a hell of a one-two punch in this town," says Robert Strauss, former Democratic Party chairman. "It's like adding two and two and getting five." Dole has never been coy about his presidential ambitions. He believes 1984 would have been perfect timing for him but says, "I haven't seen any moving vans outside the White House. There's no doubt in my mind that the president's running, and I think he should run."

He has now set his sights on 1988 and is anxious to put the double-Dole team on the road to test its appeal. So far, their rare joint appearances have received rave reviews. At the Gridiron Dinner, Secretary Dole interrupted the senator's declaration that Dole would not be a presidential candidate in 1984. "Speak for yourself, sweetheart!" she shouted. (Elizabeth, who confesses her natural humor takes "three or four weeks" to prepare, has been taking comic cues from her husband. At a newspaper publishers' convention in New York this year, she justified her staunch commitment to air bags in

automobiles by explaining, "I ought to know. I married one.")

If the senator runs for president, he can count on the secretary to step out of the limelight and into the role of candidate's wife. She has done so twice before—in 1976, when Dole ran for vice president with Gerald Ford, and in 1980 during his bid for the GOP presidential nomination. "I don't have to be No. 1 all the time," Elizabeth says. "I hope I've changed my priorities so that career is not the center of my life."

Mean! Bob jokingly calls Elizabeth his one-woman "Southern strategy," but friends insist she's far more valuable than that. In his national debut as Ford's running mate, Dole played the fitchet-man role Spiro Agnew had perfected for Richard Nixon, and his acid tongue was well suited to the part: during a debate with his Democratic counterpart, Walter Mondale, for instance, he joked about Mondale's nervous mien, wondering whether AFL-CIO boss George Meany had served as his makeup man. "He wasn't too selective about his targets," says

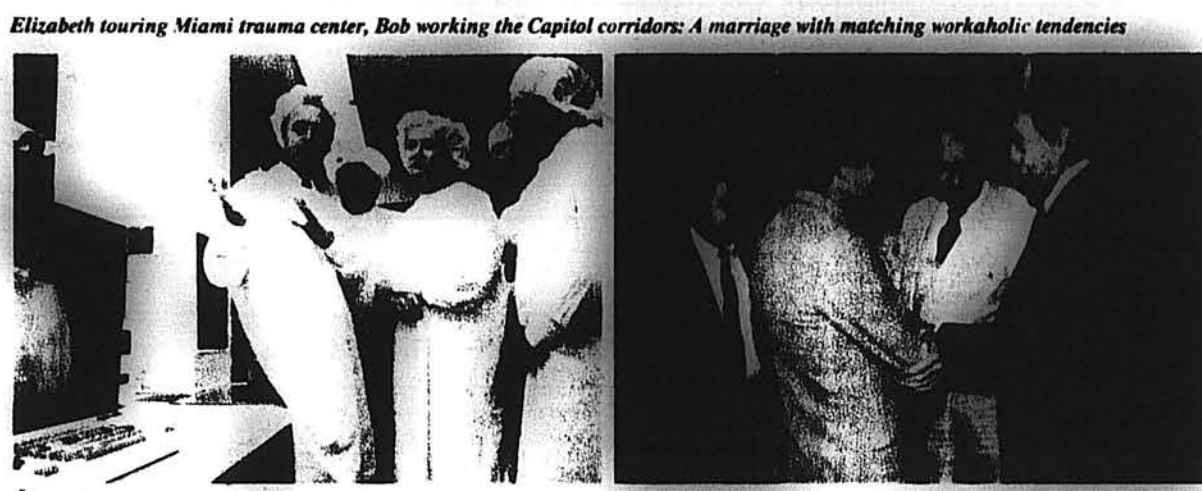
NATIONAL AFFAIRS

McGill (Huck) Boyd, a Kansas newspaper publisher. "He could be mean and vindictive."

Boyd and others credit the senator's wife—with a visible mellowing in the senator. Bill Wohlford, the senator's former aide, recalls how she critiqued her husband's '76 campaign performance. "Since Elizabeth, the thrust of his stories tends to be turned back on himself," says Boyd. "He's more gracious, less tart." Such praise of Elizabeth's influence is especially significant coming from one of the senator's Kansas friends, many of whom wanted to dislike her out of loyalty to Dole's first wife. But Elizabeth's charm won them over—including Dole's ex-wife. "When my [second] husband died," says Phyllis Buzick, "one of the first people to call was Elizabeth."

Ronald Reagan is well aware of Secretary Dole's political assets. Because of her appeal to women and minorities, constituencies that are perpetual political problems for him, the president is increasingly utilizing Dole on political missions. Recently she had to cut short some Transportation Department business in Baltimore to helicopter to the White House for a presidential signing of a child-support resolution. Her husband applauds Reagan's instincts—"If they're smart, they'll just buy her a road map and an airplane and say, 'See you after the election'"—but the secretary is a little less enthusiastic. "I want to help any way I can," she says, "but I'm also going to run the Department of Transportation, and you can't run it from the road."

One political task the secretary says she won't handle is conveying private White House messages to a powerful senator she knows quite well. (The senator is more pragmatic: "If I pick up tidbits about who's going



Elizabeth touring Miami trauma center, Bob working the Capitol corridors: A marriage with matching workaholic tendencies

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Views

Dole belly flops on push

for tax hike



Evans and Novak

Sen. Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) is attempting a tax-raising act even more difficult than his 1982 spectacular but so far has been landing face down, because Ronald Reagan never masking his presidential ambitions, he is playing to the Washington and financial establishments as the man who confronted the budget deficit.

Dole has insisted publicly all year that no major tax increase would be possible without Reagan's blessing. But insiders on Capitol Hill have predicted the Finance chairman would move at the proper moment to duplicate his 1982 tour de force.

The proper moment came Oct. 21 at the White House when Dole unveiled his budget-reduction package to Baker's legislative strategy group. Dole's tax hikes mainly hit upper-middle and upper tax brackets and alicie Reagan's cherished tax indexing (to protect middle-income taxpayers from bracket creep) though Dole previously proclaimed indexing inviolate.

Nobody encouraged Dole. In fact, the administration made it clear it would shoot down Dole's plan if he unveiled it. It criticized too much tax increase, not enough spending cuts, and especially ad-

Howard H. Baker Jr. and White House Chief of Staff James A. Baker III. Reagan, Baker and Baker simply see no political utility in a massive tax increase just as the recovery gathers steam going into a presidential election. But why then is Dole for it? Never masking his presidential ambitions, he is playing to the Washington and financial establishments as the man who confronted the budget deficit.

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Dole calls for one dollar of spending cuts matching every dollar of tax hikes. But in passing the 1982 tax hike, he promised a 3-1 ratio of spending cuts over tax hikes while, in fact, spending has since risen.

Sen. William V. Roth Jr. of Delaware led a revolt of Finance Committee Republicans. The senators telephoned the White House to find out whether Dole was acting with West Wing approval.

The answer was a definitive no. When press spokesman Larry Speakes repudiated the Dole package Oct. 28, he was reflecting the views of the president, Jim Baker and presidential assistant Richard Darman—Dole's three allies a year ago.

Dole could count only on furtive support from budget director David A. Stockman and economic adviser Martin S. Feldstein. A relatively modest \$12 billion tax increase was adopted by Dole's Finance Committee Monday, but nobody was deceived. He will attempt his high-wire act again, seeking a committee majority through the time-honored gimmick of dispensing "goodies" to individual members.

His idolators in Washington believe he can pull it off against the wishes of his president and his party, but that may prove one trick too many even for Dole.

66 Dole calls for one dollar of spending cuts matching every dollar of tax hikes.

manahed him for a scheme that would force Reagan to propose election-year Social Security cuts while enabling the Democratic House to rescind them.

What happened next has two possible explanations: Dole misunderstood what was said at the White House, or simply decided to brazen through. When he met with the Senate Republican leadership Oct. 26, he asserted that the White House had promised not to shoot down his plan. Dole expected an endorsement from the Senate leadership that day. But Baker would not go along, particularly without a clear White House green light.

Dole moved quickly. Removal of oil excise provisions won support from two oil-state senators—Oklahoma Democrat David L. Boren and Wyoming Republican Malcolm Wallop.

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