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As Dole's fame grows, Kansans question his loyalty

By Stephen C. Fehr
Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Years ago, while visiting constituents in the "Big 1st" Congressional District of western Kansas, Bob Dole was stuck in Salina without a ride to the airport.

A housewife with her 4-year-old son wound up giving the U.S. representative a lift. On the way the boy threw an ear-piercing tantrum because his mother didn't have a piece of gum.

A few days later she received a letter from Mr. Dole that said, in part: "Thank you for the ride to the airport when one wasn't available. And by the way, give this stick of gum to Billy." Enclosed was a piece of gum.

Attention to detail was a Dole trademark.

As a congressman, he answered his mail, called constituents and came home frequently. "He set the standard for constituent services in the First District," said Rep. Pat Roberts, a Republican who now represents the area.

As Mr. Dole grew in national political stature, he cut back on time spent with constituents. The impression left with many Kansans is that the senator sometimes forgets about his state because he's preoccupied with his national prominence and political ambitions.

The problem is more acute than at any time in Mr. Dole's career, according to the senator's Kansas polit-

ical advisers and other state officials.

"To put it in a nice way, one of his strongest supporters in Kansas told me that he (Mr. Dole) has outgrown his constituency," Mr. Roberts said. "I think there's a perception among some that he's put other things first. I don't think that's true, but people wear personal and parochial blinders to what Bob Dole's role really is."

One issue — Mr. Dole's trenchant support of the withholding provision in the 1982 tax bill — brought the senator's unpopularity to a head, his political associates said.

"There's no question at this point that it (Mr. Dole's position) is a strong negative," said Kansas Attorney General Robert T. Stephan, a Republican and Dole defender. "But I don't think it's a fair negative."

Kansans, prodded by the state's financial institutions, which claimed that withholding constituted a new tax, barked loudly at Mr. Dole, who argued that withholding would prevent the loss of about \$8 billion a year in unreported income. Thousands of people wrote and called the senator, but he refused to back down.

Harold Stones, the veteran executive director of the Kansas Bankers Association who helped Mr. Dole win his first election in 1960, said the senator's attitude on withholding was symptomatic of an overall trouble spot.

"His problem isn't withholding,"

Long career of public service

Sen. Bob Dole has had a long and varied public life. The public positions he has held include:

- Kansas House of Representatives, 1951-53.
- Russell County, Kan., attorney, 1953-61.
- U.S. House of Representatives, 1961-69.
- U.S. Senate, 1969 to date.
- Chairman, Republican National Committee, 1971-73.
- GOP nominee for vice president, 1976.
- Republican candidate for president, 1980.
- Senate Finance Committee chairman, 1981 to date.

Mr. Stones said. "It's the same problem he had before and after withholding: the perception in people's minds of Bob Dole. Because of the national attention he gets, in the barbershop in Dodge City they say, 'I'm not sure he cares about Kansas, too.' Bob Dole's challenge is to persuade the people of Kansas that, 'By God, Kansas is my home and I care about it and you Kansans are damn important to me.'"

Mr. Dole, who said he thought the withholding problem had died down, responded: "They (Kansans) have to know what they want, whether they want someone who won't fight any battles and just be an agent say-

ing what they want to hear. My own view is . . . pretty soon you have to decide, 'Do I want to be here forever and send out lots of nice newsletters and be certain I'm in Kansas every weekend and holiday, or do I want to contribute something and really help be a part of what's going on in the national political process?'"

On national farm policy, Mr. Dole calls many of the shots. Many lawmakers and lobbyists said Mr. Dole is the de facto chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

When Mr. Reagan went shopping for an agriculture secretary in 1981, Mr. Dole sent him a map with pins stuck in the home states of other Cab-

inet appointees, showing that no one had been selected from the Midwest. The president chose Mr. Dole as a candidate, John R. Block of Illinois.

Aware of the administration's coolness toward negotiating a new long-term grain agreement with the Soviet Union, Mr. Dole worked behind the scenes to get both sides together, which resulted in a new five-year agreement last year.

Mr. Dole persuaded Mr. Block to hold a "drought summit" last summer in Chicago that led to increased emergency aid to farmers. No farm bill goes through Congress without his imprimatur.

Mr. Dole also has used his influence with the administration to aid Kansans in more parochial ways. The most recent example was last week when Mr. Dole's phone calls to Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger resulted in the announcement that a B-1 bomber wing would replace the Titan II missiles at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita.

Mr. Dole's personal intervention with Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Samuel R. Pierce Jr. last summer led to a \$10 million grant for a shopping center in downtown Manhattan, Kan. In 1982 the senator pressed then Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis to budget \$12 million to repair parts of Interstate 35 in Kansas City.

In at least one area — relief from high natural gas prices — Mr. Dole has been virtually silent. Last year

he opposed a proposal by Kansas Republican Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum to tighten price controls on natural gas. Mr. Dole said that every lawmaker has a personal agenda; natural gas wasn't on his last year.

"(I wish) there was some way to let people know what you're doing," the senator said. "A lot of people don't have the foggiest notion. They're still convinced we don't work hard, are overpaid and don't do anything back here. I don't know how you get the message across. You can't be here and there both. Obviously if you don't have a leadership role to play you can be out there (in Kansas) more, put out self-serving newsletters and be a lot more popular. Everyone wants to be popular and respected but I also believe that Kansans want leadership. If you have an opportunity to do it in your lifetime, you ought to do it."

Tully Plesser, Mr. Dole's New York pollster, discounted assessments of the senator's unpopularity in Kansas, saying that people may complain about Mr. Dole but when faced with an alternative, "they'd want him in the Senate forever."

Mr. Dole's other advisers in Kansas are more circumspect. "I have a feeling he's going to be spending more time in Kansas (before the 1986 election)," said Huck Boyd, a Phillipsburg, Kan., newspaper publisher who is Mr. Dole's senior political confidant in Kansas. "He's not stupid. He knows the things being said."

Senator's advisers leave their imprints

By Stephen C. Fehr
Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Huck Boyd had been driving a good three hours. He had left Wichita after dinner on that chilly winter night early in 1960 and was headed home to Phillipsburg in northwest Kansas.

It was around 11 p.m. As Mr. Boyd was passing through Russell, the county seat of Russell County, he noticed a light burning in the county courthouse, and he pulled his 1958 Buick over to have a look.

"I said to myself, 'Gee, I wonder who in this place works that late,'" recalled Mr. Boyd, who publishes the newspaper in Phillipsburg. "I needed to get out and stretch anyway . . . so I went in."

Mr. Boyd found the 36-year-old county prosecutor, Bob Dole, coming through index cards of names of political contacts he had developed, first as a state representative and then as prosecuting attorney. Mr. Dole was preparing for his campaign for Congress, which he won later that year.

Mr. Boyd, an unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate in 1966, left that chance meeting impressed. Anyone who worked that hard, he figured, was someone to be reckoned with in politics. The association has endured. Mr. Boyd, who is age 76 is something of a sage in Kansas Republican politics, is Mr. Dole's senior Kansas adviser.

Virtually every politician has known a Huck Boyd in his career. Collectively the public official's coterie of friends, colleagues and associates make up what is known as a political network. They are the people who sustain and nurture the political figure's career by dispensing advice and ideas. Often the very success of a politician depends on them.

"The strength of it is that they're out there if you need them," Mr. Dole said. "They are generally people who will tell you if you're in good shape or bad shape. . . . When you have friends around, they are almost like ears. It's almost like being there."

"You sort of need people who'll give you the straight stuff. You don't have time for fun and games if you want to get your work done."

Mr. Dole in 23 years in Washington has developed an extensive network of contacts in Kansas and the nation's capital. But unlike some politicians who rely on advisers to actually make major decisions for them, Mr. Dole likes to do things on his own as much as he can. There is no daily

or weekly meeting, but the influence of his network is inescapable. Some recent examples:

• After reading a magazine article early in 1983 about a rise in the number of hungry Americans, Mr. Dole turned to political intimate Marshall Mats, lobbyist for the American School Food Service Association, whose proposal calling for an increase in the distribution of government-owned surplus commodities was introduced by Mr. Dole in the Senate. The result: Congress later extended the commodity distribution program for two years.

• Shortly after Mr. Dole pushed through the loophole-closing \$88.4 billion tax increase package in 1982, his Kansas political director, Dave Owen of Stanley in Johnson County, began hearing rumblings from Kansas bankers about a provision in the bill that called for financial institutions to withhold income tax from interest and dividend income.

Mr. Owen, a banker, alerted Mr. Dole and began to explain the senator's side to the troubled Kansas bankers and their customers.

When pressure from bankers nationwide forced Congress to repeal the withholding provision, Mr. Owen brought together a group of bankers in Topeka to meet with Mr. Dole to kick around better ways to raise money while still cracking down on tax cheats. The result: a compromise in Congress that allowed Mr. Dole to save some face and the U.S. Treasury to save from \$2.6 billion to \$5 billion a year.

• In Mr. Dole's travels, one of his political confidants noticed that the senator often performed best in small groups. David A. Keene, a GOP consultant, advised Mr. Dole that some media-age politicians have to be sheltered from small groups because their audiences dis- trust them. Mr. Dole, said Mr. Keene, has such a fine memory for detail and shows such warmth in small groups that his audiences generally go away impressed. The result: Whenever possible on the public speaking trail, Mr. Dole appears before small groups.

Mr. Dole doesn't always heed the suggestions of his allies. Before the 1980 New Hampshire senatorial primary, Mr. Dole solicited advice from his brother, Kenneth, Mr. Boyd and Mr. Owen as to whether he should continue as a candidate for the Republican nomination despite having been thrashed in the Iowa caucuses. They told him to pull out



Sen. Bob Dole says he relies on an extensive network of political allies.

and concentrate instead on winning re-election in Kansas. Mr. Dole stayed in the national contest until New Hampshire voters soundly rejected him.

In many ways Robert Lighthizer, who served as Mr. Dole's chief counsel for more than two years until being named deputy U.S. trade representative in 1983, and Roderick DeArment, the current chief counsel, know Mr. Dole best. They have spent the most time with Mr. Dole on the Senate floor, and their opinions usually carry substantial weight.

Early in 1982, when it became clear that the nation was headed toward huge budget deficits, Mr. Lighthizer and Mark McCaughy of the Joint Committee on Taxation helped convince Mr. Dole to unite Republicans and Democrats, the White House and Congress behind the politically unsavory \$88.4 billion tax increase — an accomplishment Mr. Lighthizer called "the greatest jewel in Dole's crown."

Similarly, Mr. DeArment is a player behind the scenes in Mr. Dole's effort to work a legislative miracle in 1984 with a compromise that would shrink mushrooming deficits. Dubbed the "101st senator" because of the clout he carried as Mr. Dole's counsel, Mr. Lighthizer, as deputy trade representative, negotiated the U.S.-Soviet grain agreement

last summer, a deal that Mr. Dole

loyal helped secure.

Mr. Dole's agriculture network is extensive. Time and again Mr. Dole checks with his friends in the commodity organizations, such as Carl Schwensen of the National Association of Wheat Growers and Michael Hall of the National Association of Corn Growers, to find out what the farm groups want in legislation. On food stamp issues, he talks to Robert Greenstein, who headed nutrition programs in the Carter administration, and Mr. Mats, both of whom are Democrats.

A special influence on the senator has been agriculture consultant Martin Sorkin of Washington, a former Department of Agriculture economist who was a founder of the government's international Food for Peace program. Mr. Sorkin, a neighbor of Mr. Dole's in the Watergate residential complex, regularly talks to Mr. Dole through staff members, especially about international agriculture economics.

Within the administration, Mr. Dole has broad contacts in agriculture. He helped secure the appointments of Agriculture Secretary John R. Block, department economist William Leshner and USDA administrator John J. Franke Jr. of Overland Park. One of his political buddies in Kansas, Frank Mosher, heads the state office of the Agriculture Sta-



Mr. Boyd, Mr. Owen, Mr. Baker, Mr. Korologos, Mr. DeArment, Mr. Mats, Mr. Nofziger, Mr. Lighthizer.

bilization and Conservation Service in Manhattan. Another Kansan and Dole ally, Kalo Hineham of Dighton, serves as the only farmer on the Senate Agriculture Committee. Outside of Washington, Mr. Dole likes to bounce ideas off Dean Evans, a Salina grain dealer who has been a prime financial contributor to Mr. Dole.

At the White House, Mr. Dole taps chief of staff James A. Baker III, whom Mr. Dole knew from President Gerald R. Ford's staff when he ran for vice president and who recruited Mr. Dole's wife, Elizabeth, for President Reagan's staff before she became transportation secretary. Mr. Dole's wife includes budget director David A. Stockman and Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan.

White House press spokesman Larry Speakes was Mr. Dole's 1978 campaign press secretary, and public affairs director Michael F. Baroody also is a former Dole staffer.

Mr. Dole's wife provides him with an inside link to the Reagan administration, although the two said they deliberately have tried to keep some distance on spilling congressional and administration secrets.

Former staff members and Kansas friends of Mr. Dole are sprinkled throughout the federal bureaucracy. Mr. Dole has helped some of his staff members get positions in the administration.

The days of political kingmakers are long gone in Kansas, but Mr. Dole does have considerable power with state Republican Party officials, including Mr. Owen, who is state GOP chairman and had Mr. Dole's support for the 1982 gubernatorial nomination. With Mr. Dole's backing, Kansas politicians are able to raise money and enlist workers who are loyal to the senator.

As Mr. Dole plays out his three-pronged political strategy for 1984, he'll depend largely on Mr. Keene and Charlie Black, both consultants, the latter with connections to Mr. Reagan and conservative groups.

The Doles are close to Lyn Nofziger, Mr. Reagan's veteran political director and now a Washington consultant. John Sears, a former political adviser to Mr. Reagan, is on Mr. Dole's list of trusted political advisers as is Robert F. Ellsworth, the former congressman from Johnson County who is chairman of Mr. Dole's political action committee. The senator also likes to keep in touch with Wichita banker Jordan Haines.

Writing Mr. Dole's speeches is Richard Smith, an accomplished Washington author who also writes speeches for Mr. Regan, Mrs. Dole and others.

Despite his vast political network, Mr. Dole doesn't have close personal friends among his Senate colleagues, though he works with and is respected by several senators and representatives in both parties.

"You visit with a lot of members but you never really develop close ties," Mr. Dole said. "They've got their own agenda."

Hatchet man to statesman: Dole fashions a new image that works

Continued from Page A-6

they said, would be asking him to be someone he isn't.

"I can't point to it (Mr. Dole's style) as a liability because it's in the fabric of the man and on balance it's positive," said Mr. Plesser, the pollster.

Mr. Dole did not dispute the "scorcher" tag, but he said he tries to be less sharp-tongued than he once was.

Another Dole trait is his tendency to bear grudges and punish people by cutting off their contact with him for long periods, several of his supporters acknowledged. It is lore in Washington that reporters who write critical articles about the senator can expect to be denied access to him for a while.

"He just has a way, if you get on his wrong side, of putting you in the deep freeze and making life miserable," said Mr. Owen, the Kansas political aide and current state party chairman. "No one wants to risk that, especially those in his close employ."

"If someone doesn't produce," said Mr. Dole, "why waste your time with them? . . . We always have to defend ourselves on this job. I've always had the view of reporters that

if they're going to hang you, make them buy their own rope. Why should I buy the rope and let them come in and do a job right on me in the office?"

Limited private life

One of the reasons some of Mr. Dole's associates find him paradoxical is the contrast in his public and private lives. The senator thrives on publicity and has built a vast network of legislative and political associates, but in private he has few close friends and interests outside of politics.

"I think he has such a strong personal commitment to public service that there aren't enough hours in a day for personal enjoyment and relaxation with friends," said Ms. Coe, his political director.

Mr. Dole and his wife like to work on Saturdays and rarely take more than a few days of vacation each year. The straight-laced senator's idea of a good time "is going home and curling up to watch McNeil-Lehrer," said a former news secretary, Bob Waite. Mr. Dole laughed at the comment and said: "I do like the news shows."

Some of the senator's most loyal backers said they thought Mr. Dole was too consumed by politics. Asked

what he wished Mr. Dole would change about himself, Mr. Plesser said: "I would ask him to pace himself differently, so he doesn't burn himself out. I would like to see him let his hair down more."

Added Mr. Waite, a former staff member: "I'd like for him to be more well-rounded. I'd like it if he were a rabid Washington Redskins or KU (University of Kansas) fan. I wish he had more friends he could let his hair down with."

Plan for the future

Though Mr. Dole stressed that he had no written step-by-step master plan through 1988, there is nothing subtle about his political agenda, which is designed to make him the party's Senate leader, ensure another six-year Senate term, and develop a national constituency for a possible presidential bid in 1988. And he is not coy in explaining his goals.

Of the presidential bid, he said: "Depending on what happens in 1984, I'm not going to sit around until 1986 to plot planning. I'm going to get together my friends and say, 'OK, fellas. The next election is 1988. Whether we have an interest or not, we ought to talk about it.'"

Recently Mr. Dole became the first among his Republican colleagues to

officially declare that he would be a candidate for the top GOP leadership post in the Senate. Since then he has called most of the 55 Republicans asking for their support.

Other possible contenders include Sen. James A. McClure of Idaho, Sen. Pete Domenici of New Mexico, Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana and Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska, the majority whip.

Mr. Dole's political advisers said the senator's main roadblock could be conservative senators who prefer someone more in tune with their ideology, like Mr. McClure. Mr. Dole, once characterized as a die-hard conservative, is now viewed by his colleagues as being conservative to moderate, depending on the issue.

"Dole really is positioned a little less conservatively than McClure or Jesse Helms (of North Carolina)," said Mr. Black, the consultant to Mr. Reagan and Mr. Helms. "But he's more conservative than (Bob) Packwood (of Oregon) and (Lowell) Weicker (of Connecticut). As the most effective leader, Dole would win. However, there's a tendency to vote philosophy."

To consultant David A. Keene, a former campaign director to Vice President George Bush who has been retained by Mr. Dole, the Kansas Re-

publican would represent the riskiest but best choice.

"Baker is a comfortable leader. McClure is comfortable. But Dole is more combative and competitive. The senators would view Dole as a higher risk but with potentially greater rewards," Mr. Keene said.

Mr. Dole's fortunes also depend on the outcome of the 1984 elections. The GOP's 10-vote edge in the Senate is considered precarious, with 19 Republicans and 14 Democrats up for re-election. To ensure that his party holds the upper hand, Mr. Dole plans an ambitious travel schedule to campaign on behalf of Senate colleagues who must face the voters. He will concentrate especially on the farm belt and the industrial Midwest where his is a familiar face.

But his travel schedule also calls for trips to Western and other states. Those forays will allow Mr. Dole to take his story on the road "to tell America he's changed," Mr. Keene said, which is part of the senator's effort to build a base for the presidency.

Mr. Keene and other advisers to Mr. Dole have told the senator that they believe it is important for him, if he wants to run for president, to become exposed to as many audiences as possible. Among others, the Dole constituency centers on women,

with his wife helping him; handicapped persons, veterans, agriculture interests and Americans interested in tax reform — a potentially sizable pool, his advisers said.

Raising money is another motive behind Mr. Dole's travels. To pay for his own trips and contributions to his colleagues, Mr. Dole's advisers arrange fund-raising receptions throughout the nation, bringing Mr. Dole together with influential people who might contribute to a presidential campaign.

The money is channeled through a political action committee that was set up by Mr. Dole in 1978. The political action committee, called Campaign America, is an example of a growing trend among politicians like Mr. Dole who establish a fund to finance their political activities. From January through November 1983, Campaign America raised \$768,507 and spent \$240,461.

While seeking support among his colleagues for the Senate leadership post, Mr. Dole said, he was told that his presidential ambitions may hurt his bid to lead Senate Republicans. "One (senator) said (but) you want to be president," Mr. Dole responded. "I said, 'So does Dick Lugar and anyone else if they were offered it.'"