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Bob Dole and his wife, Elizabeth, who is Secretary of Transportation. In Washington, writes the author, they are known as the "power couple."

growth military budget and a one-year freeze in the inflation adjustment for Social Security.

Dole's tactical agility has earned him high marks as a superb improviser, but characteristically, his tactics fit into an overall strategy. "He's always improvising, always probing, probing, probing," commented David A. Stockman, the budget director. "But he knows where he is going."

Said another top White House official: "He really knows how to count votes. He has a fine feeling for where his senators will be, when to press, when to back off, when to use persuasion on the facts and when to persuade on the politics of the situation."

Democrats, frustrated by Dole's control of the floor, accused him of railroading tactics. Robert C. Byrd, the minority leader, complained that the game "is being played with a velvet glove, but it is hardball."

**R**OBERT JOSEPH DOLE MAY NOT be ready to announce his campaign, but his strong ambition to be President is an open secret to other Republicans, and his irrepressible wit betrays it. After several hours at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue one day, he returned to the Senate kiding about "my first day at the White House." At a family dinner once, he perked up at the mention of people in Nevada who love Bob Dole. "Did you get their names?" he asked. "They might be delegates."

He cannot resist verbal jabs at Representative Jack F. Kemp of Buffalo, whom he has marked as a special adversary. They clash constantly over Republican priorities. The Kemp line is that Dole is a throwback to the traditional, tightfisted austerity politics that have kept Republicans a minority party. The Dole rebuttal is that Kemp, with his supply-side economics, likes to preach that tax revision and economic growth are painless cures for the nation's problems, "while some of us do all the dirty work" on budget-cutting. At a White House meeting, Kemp cautioned President Reagan that his tax plan would not pass if opposed by the United States Chamber of Commerce. "Well, I don't know," teased Dole. "I remember back in 1982, I not only

had the chamber against my tax bill, but Kemp, too, and we passed it."

Dole's relations with Vice President Bush are more respectful, but there is rivalry. Two weeks before the final budget vote, Dole fantasized mischievously in an interview about arranging a Senate tie so that Bush would have to cast the deciding vote to kill next year's cost-of-living increase for Social Security. "Don't want George to miss this," he teased. It worked out precisely that way, much to the chagrin of the Bush camp.

Dole's toughness on budget cuts, especially his refusal to combat the deficit with tax increases, won accolades from conservatives who had assailed him as "the tax collector for the welfare state" for masterminding the 1982 tax increase. "He has surprised us all with the strength and openness of his leadership," commented Paul Weyrich, a leader of the right-wing Coalitions for America. "What he did on the budget is remarkable."

Politicians disagree on how that will translate into votes. Some expect to see Dole begin to edge up to Bush in Republican opinion polls, but others, pointing to his eighth-place finish in the 1980 New Hampshire primary, say he lacks a strong political base and cannot fire popular passions.

Dole's first hurdle is to win a fourth Senate term from Kansas in 1986. Representative Dan Glickman, a popular, four-term Democrat from Wichita, may oppose him. Dole has raised more than \$1.8 million for his campaign, much of it from Washington-based trade federations, Kansas banks and major agribusinesses like Archer-Daniels-Midland Company of Illinois. He has also hired Richard Wirthlin, the President's poll-taker, for a Kansas survey. He keeps in touch with top Republican political managers like John Sears, Charles Black, Lyn Nofziger and James Lake, all veterans of Reagan campaigns. Some were with Dole in 1976, or when he headed the Republican National Committee in 1971-73. David A. Keene, another experienced operative who helped George Bush in 1980, advises Campaign America. That is the political action committee through which Dole raises funds that he then distributes to the campaigns of fellow Republicans, gathering political i.o.u.'s in the process.

But his most potent ally is his wife, Elizabeth Hanford Dole, Secretary of Transportation since 1983 and before that a White House aide. In Washington, they are called the "power couple." In 1980, she stumped for him in Iowa and New Hampshire. Although she has never won elective office, some politicians think that, with her Harvard law degree, high-level government experience and articulate charm, "Liddy" Dole is a possibility for a Vice-Presidential nomination.

Some Republican rivals suggest that her candidacy could push Bob Dole to the sidelines, but the Senator seems to take that kind of talk in stride. At the Republican Convention last summer, his aides passed out "Dole '88" campaign buttons with side-by-side cameos of both. Now, he deftly shifts the issue with comic patter. When Elizabeth Dole went to New Hampshire for what she said was a nonpolitical appearance, the Senator poked fun. "It was just a quirk of fate she had dinner with the '84 delegates," he deadpanned to one audience. "Kemp was there, too. They split the tab."

In another episode, displaying Senator Dole's increased ability to turn his humor against himself instead of others, and to capitalize on that as an asset, he drew a warm response from a largely female commencement audience at Kansas Newman College with a story about his wife's appointment to the Cabinet. "There were a lot of stories and a lot of pictures taken," he recalled. "I was always in the picture, but I was never identified. They said, 'The man on the left is the husband.' People magazine took an interest in Elizabeth, so a photographer followed us around and took about 300 pictures. They wound up using three, and one showed us making the bed."

"Some guy out in California whose wife had read the story wrote that he was now helping make the bed. He said, 'Senator, I don't mind your wife getting the job. She's well qualified. She's doing good work. But you've got to stop doing the work around the house. You're causing problems for men all across the country.'"

"I wrote back and said, 'Buster, you don't know the half of

it. The only reason she was helping was because they were taking pictures.'"

Later, when I asked them, as they sat side by side for a photograph, who does make the bed, he replied: "I do," and she agreed: "True."

"Who does the cooking?"

Bob: "What cooking?"

Elizabeth: "Lean Cuisine."

Bob: "I don't know the chef's name at the Jockey Club."

Elizabeth: "If I get home and try to fix some good hot dinner for him, chances are there are four receptions or a budget meeting that night, or heaven knows what. We are very ad hoc about it. It's fun when we can get away for a weekend. We really try to put Sunday aside."

Despite their supercharged careers, their personal lives are casual. "We enjoy going out to dinner or watching

an old movie on television," Elizabeth Dole said. They seem like hotel guests passing through their one-bedroom flat with balcony in the Watergate. They have no children from their 10-year marriage (her first, his second). Robin, his grown daughter by his first marriage, to Phyllis Holden, which ended in divorce in 1972, lives in Virginia.

Their routine is to arise at 6:45, take turns walking Leader, their schnauzer,

and then head for separate breakfasts. "It's easier to eat at our offices than trying to do it at home," she explained.

Travel adds crazy episodes. Once, after both had been away for four days, they returned to Washington the same afternoon and bumped into each other at a Kansas Chamber of Commerce dinner. "It really was funny," Mrs. Dole recalled, "because I just literally walked up to him and held out my hand and we shook hands. We were shaking hands with everybody so we shook hands with each other. I said, 'Bob, you've lost a little weight since I saw you last.' And he said, 'I think you're wearing your hair a little different.'"

Many believe their marriage has mellowed the harsh partisan edge for which he was known in the 1970's. She, more than he, defensively denies that, saying she went back through television tapes of the 1976 campaign and found no justice to the charge that he had been a Republican gunslinger.

"The Bob Dole I know now," she asserted, "is the Bob Dole I knew 10 years ago, when we were married. He's always been a very compassionate person."

"Well, I think we all change," the Senator added. "I always go back and take a look at what people say. They might be right. You may be upset at the time when somebody writes something or says something. But you never want to totally disregard it — might be a grain of truth in it. So I don't say I made any abrupt change. But at least it probably had an influence. Because right or wrong, I got the reputation and I had to make certain that whatever was out there, I erased it or changed it."

To some, his efforts seemed calculated, like his self-deprecating admission after the 1976 election that he had hurt himself by "going after the jugular" of his own. "But many other politicians, including Democrats such as George McGovern, the 1972 nominee who was once a target of Dole attacks, believe Dole has matured. 'He grew as a person in the 1970's,' McGovern commented. 'He began to understand the system better and to see the shortcomings of his little partisan approach. I have high regard for Dole, both as a politician and as a man.'"

As for the future, Elizabeth Dole sees no conflict between her prospects and his Presidential ambitions. "I really don't have plans to run, that's not something I have a blueprint for," she said. "And as far as Vice President, that's not something you run for. I know Bob has an interest in the Presidency. It's absolutely his decision. Obviously, if he decides he's going to go for it, then I would back him 100 percent and I would want to help him in every way I could. He's got a lot to offer this country."

**I**T IS A TIME WARP FROM THE world of power to the corner of 11th and Maple where Bob Dole grew up in Russell, Kan. (population nearly 6,000).

At 9 P.M., the sky is still bright with the setting sun. The wind that buffets the open plain all day is at rest. A moment of calm descends after a homecoming at the Elks Club and table-to-table handshaking at the change-of-command party at the Veterans of For-

sign Wars, where the talk is about wheat headed below \$3 a bushel.

Aunt Gladys's fried chicken and homemade vanilla ice cream are being ferried into the Dole family home. After traveling around Kansas all day, the Senator turns reflective.

He points a block away. "Over there is the house where I was born. They tore it down. I should have bought it. They offered it to me for \$2,500. It had one bedroom, a living room and one little kitchen."

The Senator grew up in a cozy one-story brick home at 11th and Maple. With his parents now dead, Dole owns the house.

"Four of us kids and my parents lived in the basement apartment for years so we could get the rent money from renting out the ground floor," he recalls. "My father ran a creamery and a grain elevator. My mother sold sewing machines and gave sewing lessons. I'm the only one who had a college education. My sister Norma Jean went one year."

"My grandfather, Joseph Talbot, lost all his land in the Depression. My other grandfather, Robert Grant Dole, was a tenant farmer. He never had a lot of money. As county attorney, I used to have to sign papers for his welfare payment every month. That memory haunts him and he adds slowly: "Which is a hard thing to do."

"So we don't come from any money in our family," he concludes. "I'm a little sensitized to people who work hard all their lives and don't quite make it."

sometimes forget his disability. His biggest problem, he says, is putting on a shirt, because he cannot feel the buttons.

"Some days, I just can't do it," he says. "I can't get a tux on. That's why I turn down a lot of black-tie dinners. If Elizabeth is around, I can manage it."

Dole has become a champion of programs for the handicapped. Three years ago, in Dodge City, he kept a meeting of bankers waiting while two young people in wheelchairs talked to him. He was so moved by their plight that he set up the Dole Foundation and has raised \$500,000 to help stimulate job opportunities for the disabled.

But Dole shows no emotion about his disability, or about almost anything. "Bob is a very compassionate guy, but he's not very emotional," says David Owen, a Kansas banker, former Lieutenant Governor and Dole's closest political ally. "The war took an awful lot of the emotion out of him."

When he is out hunting votes, Dole cuts a trim, handsome figure (6-1½, 175 pounds), supplied with infinite stamina and an inexhaustible fund of humor. He is a natural storyteller, though not a spellbinder. From a distance, some critics contend he is too calculating, but in person, working across his state or on the Senate floor, he comes across as a good-government conservative who believes deeply in responsible government and is willing to take political risks for his beliefs.

Knowing that some Kansas farmers want to dump him for his opposition to expanding farm credits, Dole argues for budget cutting. "If I were a farmer today," he told several thousand people at Dodge City, "I would be beating a path to the door of members of Congress to do one thing — and that's to cut spending, bring down the strength of the dollar, so he can export some of the things he raises. I happen to think the last thing most farmers want is more credit. They would rather take more of a price for their product."

His politics are not easily categorized now. He is both fiscal hawk and populist. Over the years, he has evolved from an arch conservative who fought Federal antipoverty programs, Medicare and urban mass transit aid in the 1960's to a more moderate, mainstream Republican.

Now, he promotes food stamps and other antihunger programs and has recently helped protect Medicaid and Medicare against deep budget

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Cuts. For two decades, he has backed voting rights and civil rights legislation, and in 1982, he sponsored a large tax increase that mainly hit corporations.

But lately, Dole has been courting right-wing conservatives who, for the first time since 1960, have no clear champion like Barry Goldwater or Ronald Reagan. "My credentials are good," he says. "I'm more flexible than some would like. I like to work things out. Some of them would rather lose than compromise. But I'm right on the issues. I voted for prayer in the schools. I voted for the antiabortion amendment. I voted for the balanced-budget amendment."

With many conservatives, his success may hinge on how they perceive his relationship

with President Reagan. The two men have struck up a political partnership but they have never been close. They rarely meet alone or mix socially.

Surprising to many, Dole has supported President Reagan on about 85 percent of the major legislative votes since 1981. But that figure is somewhat misleading because of Dole's ability to stake out his views and reach compromises before voting. The 1986 budget package is a classic example. With zero growth on defense and a Social Security freeze, it was closer to his opening position than the President's.

White House officials do credit Dole with "monumental success" on the budget. "Politically, what he did was three or four times the magnitude of the achievement on the budget in

1981," said David Stockman. "This has broken the stalemate on fiscal policy that has existed since August 1981."

Republican Senators have been surprised by his patient optimism, his willingness to consult them endlessly. They applaud the team spirit he fostered among them, but some also worry that his partisan style rubs against the grain of Democrats in a Senate in which fractiousness is already rife.

Others, including his friends, comment that, paradoxically, the very qualities that make him a strong legislative leader may impair his Presidential chances.

Next to his noncampaign campaign, his biggest gamble is in making the deficit his main issue. Recently, opinion polls have shown the public regards the deficit as one of the nation's main problems, but if deficits should decline through his efforts, so may public concern about them. "Success is counterproductive," lamented

Senator John C. Danforth of Missouri, a close Republican friend. "The more he succeeds in reducing the deficit, the harder it will be to make that a big political issue."

Moreover, as Senate leader, Dole's success turns on his capacity to master policy intricacies, handle the press and keep track of scores of personalities and different issues. In national politics, his self-sufficiency makes him something of a loner, which could hurt him. He has been slow to delegate and build an organization.

"Dole's inclination is to do everything himself is his biggest weakness," said a Republican strategist who admires him. "He's a very talented guy. He's attained remarkable success, pretty much by himself. But you can't become President by yourself. You can't write your own speeches. You can't raise all your own money. You have to delegate

to people you trust. And so far, he has not done that."

Beyond that is the irony that the politics of governing and the politics of campaigning in America are often at loggerheads. To be effective as leader, Senator Dole must work with both moderate and conservative Republicans, bridging their differences. But that skill robs him of the ideological clarity that fires the passions of Republican activists.

"What people vote for is a broad statement of policy, a vision," Senator Danforth observed. "An election is a referendum on broad ideas. But here in the Senate, people — particularly leaders — tend to be brokers of ideas, compromisers."

The risk, suggested John Sears, a Republican strategist, is that "Dole is everybody's second choice, which is not good, because one of the guys who's got more first choices will come along and beat you." ■