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ROBERT & ELIZABETH DOLE

America's No. 1 Power Couple



When he leaves the Senate and she leaves the Cabinet, their forwarding address could very likely be the White House... but which of them will receive the mail sent to the Oval Office has yet to be ordained!

By Kandy Stroud

Bob and Elizabeth Dole. Rarely has the nation's capital seen more clout embodied in one man and wife. He is the bold and commanding Senate Majority Leader, the first to rival LBJ's power and influence. She, as Secretary of Transportation, commands a \$28-billion budget, 100,000 employees, and her own branch of the armed services—the Coast Guard. Both Doles are considered Presidential timber. He's a strong candidate for the White House in '88. And she, although never having held elective office, is talked about as the next senator or governor from North Carolina, a candidate for Vice President, and near the top of the list of potential women Presidents.

He is sixty-two, witty, handsome and natty, a war hero, a former Vice Presidential candidate. At forty-nine, she is beautiful and bright, a former May Queen with a Phi Beta Kappa key. A dynamo of power plus sex appeal, this Cabinet member has painted toenails, a soft southern drawl, the President's ear, and the Majority Leader's bed.

They have his and her limousines and his and her press corps. Margaret Thatcher calls both of them individually when she's in town. They are hot. In demand. Invitations, both political and social, pour in daily. Awards and honorary

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Madame Secretary and Leader of the Republican Pack (telescope from far left) with pet schnauzer pup, at the GOP National Convention, amid flowers and flourishes in China, himself on the air in a rare moment alone together at home: herself in a Cabinet role

degrees are conferred on them. They crisscross the country and globe-trot in style. She wears real pearls, a diamond-and-sapphire wedding ring, and designer dresses. His clothes are custom tailored.

On December 6, 1975, when they were married in the Bethlehem Chapel of the Washington Cathedral, followed by a VIP reception at the exclusive F Street Club, President Ford asked them to stop by the Oval Office for his blessing. Former President Nixon called to congratulate them, as did Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. From all appearances, they are the ultimate two-career couple and theirs is the storybook marriage of the eighties. Yet the price they pay to scale the dizzying heights of political nirvana is enormous. Given the sacrifices involved, their life is not always as glamorous as it seems. One major frustration for this power couple is that they don't own a power house. Although married for ten years, they're still in Bob Dole's two-bedroom bachelor pad in Watergate South—a duplex with patio and room service from the Watergate Hotel. But one of the bedrooms is a small study

and there's no space for house guests, family, or serious entertaining. There's not even space for a dining-room table.

Elizabeth Dole longs for a house. "I remember when we were married," she says. "I was on the Federal Trade Commission, he was in the Senate. He said, 'Look, let's just wait. We'll find a place later. Come on, move into my apartment. Then we'll figure out where we're going to live.' For ten years now we've been saying we're going to find a place with more room, but it takes so much time to find one and then to get the moving done."

Time is one luxury the Doles do not have. Their working day often begins at 7:00 a.m. and ends at midnight. "Breakfast? What's that? That's coffee and a donut," says Senator Dole. Both the Transportation Secretary and the Majority Leader eat breakfast and lunch on the job. Dinner is usually Lean Cuisine on a TV tray, heavy snacks at receptions, or dinner at a restaurant. "The worst thing is to try and go home and say, 'Let's have dinner at 8:30 or 9:00 p.m.' That's normal checking-in time. And if I get home earlier, she's generally not there. Besides, I like to get away from a sinkful of dishes—'cause I have to do 'em. I clean up the joint after she messes it up.'"

The Senator speaks the truth. While their office staffs cater to their every need on the job, they have no help at home

THE DOLES

except a cleaning lady two-and-a-half days a week. The Doles pick up their own dry cleaning, straighten their own papers, pick up their own dog, and make their own bed. When *People* magazine did a story on Elizabeth Dole's appointment to the Cabinet, it was illustrated with a picture of the two Doles making the bed. Says Bob Dole, "Some guy out in California wrote, 'You've got to stop showing off 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.'"

Before he became Majority Leader, the Doles enjoyed entertaining frequently. Sometimes they would host a brunch for friends at Twigs, a restaurant in the Capitol Hilton Hotel. Once, they even invited friends for dinner at the elegant and expensive Jean-Louis restaurant in the Watergate. For his sixtieth birthday, Elizabeth Dole gave her husband a party complete with balloons delivered by an Eastern Onion singing-telegram lady. On their tenth wedding anniversary, they invited twenty friends, including Treasury Secretary James Baker and his wife, Susan, to a dinner at Mr. K's, one of their favorite Chinese restaurants. During Inauguration week, they entertained a hundred for lunch at the Vista International Hotel on Capitol Hill. But most friends agree that it's become impossible to plan anything with the peripatetic Doles ever since the Senator's official entertaining has increased (there are constant lunches he has to give in his office and receptions he must host for politicians or to celebrate the passage of key bills). "We've been trying to get together for months," says Tony Hope, a Washington attorney and son of comedian Bob Hope. "But our schedules just don't mesh."

Bob Dole on being asked to run for office by the Republicans and the Democrats: "I think both sides saw a guy who got all shot up in the war, and he'd likely get elected."

Exercise has fallen into the once-upon-a-time category. Bob Dole used to have a morning setting-up routine that he relied on to maintain his lean, 175-pound, 6-foot 1½-inch frame. "Now I just try not to eat too much." His wife followed a thirty-minute Elizabeth Arden tape religiously until Leader, the schnauzer she gave her husband when he was chosen Majority Leader, decided exercise was dog play. "He can't understand why you're down on the floor. All of a sudden, he's running after your hands or getting right in your path, so you're trying to move around the dog to do the exercises," she laments. Still, the former beauty queen who modeled part-time in law school has kept her size-eight figure and, unlike many high-powered women, is not loath to wear bright-colored clothes that flatter her shape and high-heeled sling-backs that show off her good legs.

Although their staffs have been instructed to maximize the couple's time together, their schedules never seem to coincide. Nor do their planes. In July, both Doles flew through Wichita, Kansas, an hour apart but never met. Sometimes neither can remember where the other was, or will be. "Where was I last weekend?" Bob Dole ponders. "Let's see," his wife puzzles. "You were in North Carolina getting an honorary degree." He recalls. "Oh yes," she recollects. "You were in Washington. You took your daughter out to dinner."

Sensor Dole says he and his wife are moving at such a rapid pace in different directions, they hardly have time to appreciate all the good things that are happening to them. Certainly,

"we can't relish it together," says Elizabeth. "Last weekend was a wonderful time for him, just relaxing with his family, and I would have liked to share that with him. Instead, I was at the University of North Carolina."

Once, after they had both been away for four days, they returned to Washington the same afternoon and bumped into each other at a Chamber of Commerce dinner. "It was really funny," says Elizabeth Dole, "because I literally walked up to him, held out my hand, and we shook hands. 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.'"

Their overloaded calendars exact a toll, and both partners admit they often lose out on time to time. Bob Dole's Valentine present from his wife last year was a convertible sofa so he can sleep in the den if Elizabeth has a very early engagement—and vice versa. "Once in a while, you have to do it that way. Bob is a light sleeper," she says. "It doesn't happen very often," says Senator Dole. "But if you're looking at your health, well, the nights get pretty short."

That the Doles ever met and married is either destiny or a quirk of fate. Both are very different people from different backgrounds and different sets of experiences. Robert was born on July 22, 1923, in the small town of Russell, Kansas (population: 6,000), to Doran and Bina Dole. He grew up during the Depression. The Dole's first house had only one bedroom, a living room, and a little kitchen. He shared a twin bed with his younger brother, Kenneth, until he was nine. His sisters, Gloria and Norma Jean, slept in the same room in the other twin bed. His father ran a creamery and grain elevator. His mother sold sewing machines and gave sewing lessons. "They worked pretty long hours," says the Senator. "Those were really tough days. Everybody worked. You didn't think about two careers. It was just a necessity."

There was no money in the Dole household for toys, clothes, cars, dates, or vacations. "We made our own scooters, toy guns, and basketball hoops," recalls Kenneth Dole, now sixty-one. "We had one pair of roller skates among the four of us, and we all shared a bike." Bob Dole had a paper route, did yard work, and jerked sodas. When he decided to go to the University of Kansas in the early forties to study pre-med, he had to support himself by waiting tables. "I remember borrowing three hundred dollars from a local banker to go to college. He said to me, 'You've got to start wearing a hat, because you're a grown man.' He also remembers squandering his first two years at the university. 'I was probably one of the best fraternity boys, but as far as my grades, they were lousy. I wasn't what you'd call disciplined.' His enlistment in the war changed all that."

On April 14, 1945, Robert Dole was critically wounded when a gunshot ruptured a kidney and fractured his cervical vertebra, paralyzing his legs and arms. The varsity football and basketball player from the University of Kansas who nearly broke the indoor track record for the quarter mile was reduced to a total cripple. "It took me about eleven months before I was able to feed myself—I'd gone from 194 to about 120 pounds." And it wasn't until a year-and-a-half later that he began to walk again. Dole says the experience changed his character. "Every day I had a new lesson in patience. It gave me a new outlook on life."

His right arm and hand is still paralyzed, and he has only limited feeling in the fingers of his left hand. As a result, it can take him ten minutes just to fasten the top button of his shirt—and he often relies on his wife for help. Pat Bailey, who took Elizabeth's place on the Federal Trade Commission when the latter moved over to the executive branch, recalls a plane trip during which the Doles sat right across from her. "Both of them were buried in their paperwork when the stewardess brought lunch. Without saying a word, Elizabeth put down her work, unwrapped the sandwich, put mayonnaise on it, and cut

it." The Transportation Secretary then handed the Majority Leader his sandwich and went back to her papers.

The Senator's lengthy recuperation—he spent a total of thirty-nine months in various hospitals—made him determined to "get those years back." He returned to school, first to the University of Arizona and then Washburn Municipal University in Topeka, where he earned his bachelor's and a law degree. Meanwhile, at the age of twenty-seven, while still in law school, Dole was elected to the Kansas legislature. He had never even thought about politics before, "but I knew I couldn't be a paperhanger or wrap cranberries, so you sort of do what you can do."

In fact, he'd been approached by both parties to run for office. "I'll be very honest with you, I think both sides saw a guy who got all shot up over there, and he'd likely get elected. I was pretty well liked in the county before the war; then I'd been shot and pretty sick, so I guess there was a lot of respect." Dole decided to choose the Republican party—although he'd been raised in a Democratic household—because he'd been contacted by the Republicans first and because the man who made that contact was a former Navy pilot whom he looked up to and who was serving as county attorney and thought Dole a likely candidate to succeed him. Indeed, Dole went on to serve four terms as Russell County attorney and, in 1946, ran successfully for the House of Representatives. Eight years later, he entered the U.S. Senate, where he has earned a reputation as a master craftsman of legislation.

The Great Depression was past its peak when Elizabeth Hanford was born on July 29, 1936, in Salisbury, North Carolina, a town four times the size of Russell. Her father, John Hanford, was a well-to-do wholesale florist. Elizabeth's was a happy, privileged, carefree childhood, complete with ballet, riding, and piano lessons. The family owned a weekend house with tennis court and small lake where friends came for hot dogs and marshmallow roasts. In the summers, Elizabeth, who nicknamed herself Liddy at the age of two, went camping and waterskiing. "We tried to give her everything she wanted," says her mother, Mary, now eighty-three, a woman who devoted her life to her children, Elizabeth and John, Jr.

Liddy was a model student and born leader. At the age of six, she helped organize Salisbury's Girl Scouts contribution to the war effort. She also was president of the bird club in third grade, formed a fifth-grade book club and appointed herself president, wrote the best essay in town when she was twelve, won the junior-high civics award, and made the National Honor Society in high school. "We never had to urge her to do her lessons," says Mary Hanford. "She liked to participate and to do her best in anything she went into."

A debutante, Elizabeth went on to Duke University, where she became president of the student body as well as May Queen. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa, studied English literature at Oxford University, received a master's degree in education from Harvard and a degree from Harvard's law school in 1965. A longtime Democrat, Elizabeth went to work for LBJ's Great Society program in 1966, specializing in problems of the handicapped (she organized the first national conference on education of the deaf). A year later, she worked in a private law firm defending indigent clients. In 1968, she saw her ticket to political advancement with Richard Nixon and switched her registration to Independent when she became executive director of the President's Committee for Consumer Interests, eventually moving up to deputy director of the Office of Consumer Affairs under Virginia Knauer.

Robert Dole, farm boy, and Elizabeth Hanford, debutante, met in 1972, the year Bob was divorced from Phyllis Holden, his wife of twenty-three years, for reasons of incompatibility. His daughter, Robin, twenty-nine, says her parents "had grown in different directions. My mother didn't work. She was heavily involved in the Congressional Club and Senate wives. They grew apart." That first meeting was strictly business.

Elizabeth visiting the Senator's office to lobby for a consumer plank in the 1972 Republican platform. "When he walked through the door," she recalls, "I just thought, 'My goodness, he's an attractive man.' The Senator was obviously attracted, too, because he jotted her name on his desk blotter, but he did not take the initiative for months. 'I guess I'm not a rapid mover,' he says. 'I wasn't used to being divorced, anyway. And I was older. I felt like a fish out of water.'"

When the romance did begin to blossom, it was over the telephone. "I remember the first call," says Elizabeth. "We talked for forty minutes about mutual interests—government, politics—and we both shared a very strong interest in the handicapped. A lot of things jibed from the very beginning. The courtship endured quietly for three years while Elizabeth worked at the White House. In fact, the romance was so discreet that two other beaux, Congressman Sonny Montgomery and Bill Reynolds of the Reynolds tobacco fortune, were astonished to learn she was marrying Dole, whom she chose "because I really loved Bob Dole. He was the right one and the feelings were there. He was a very compassionate and caring person, a strong person who would easily accept my career and wanted me to continue."

While their interests and values may have been similar, not only were their backgrounds diverse but so are many of their habits. He's a loner who solves his own problems. She likes the emotional support of friends. He admittedly is "not an intellect. I don't read Shakespeare or listen to the opera." He touches base with culture by "driving by the Kennedy Center every day." She, on the other hand, serves on the board of the opera and was on the board of the Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts. Both Dole is given to frequent displays of pique. "He gets tense," says former Transportation press secretary Mari Maseng. "She's more consistently steady." He's a last-minute person who likes flexibility. "She likes to lock it in," says one of her staff. He is willing to go on instinct. She demands preparation. Bob Dole can absorb all he needs to know on a subject from a one-page memo. Elizabeth Dole will read five-hundred pages. "She likes to know everything," says the Senator's press secretary, Walt Riker.

Elizabeth Dole on accepting her Cabinet post: "God gave us the privilege to perform. I didn't want to look back and find God gave my role to someone else because I failed to perform."

Public clashes have erupted. During the time she served as White House public liaison, Elizabeth Dole often found herself defending the administration's economic programs while Bob Dole was on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue publicly criticizing the same policies and offering alternatives. On a few occasions, when both Doles were sharing a speaking program, the Senator would follow his wife to the lectern and tell the audience with a grin, "Now that Elizabeth has given you the administration line, let me tell you what is really happening." In 1977, she supported the creation of a consumer-advocacy agency. He was against it. Instead of avoiding the issue, the Doles staged a public debate. "Elizabeth really went after him," says a friend. "She doesn't back off from a good fight."

Still, the majority opinion is that the Dole marriage is solid. Both partners understand each other, laugh at each other's jokes, and basically love each other. As Senator Mark Hatfield says, "They have a marvelous relationship. Both are politically savvy and astute, and they find that a great stimulation. The marriage is the central thing in their lives. Their political careers are secondary. Political life enriches their life together."

[continued on 224]