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Lucky Bob Dole must be inspiring as well as shrewd

WASHINGTON—Winning a presidential campaign is as much a matter of luck as of skill, and Bob Dole has already gotten a big break. It came in the form of the White House arms scandal, which, by taking the luster off the President, has made George Bush look less like a front-runner than a sure loser. Dole, without doing anything, saw his standing in the polls climb overnight.

The Kansas senator has been lucky in other ways, too. One is that two of the first three tests in the 1988 campaign are in Iowa and South Dakota, where his Midwestern roots are bound to help. Another is that his reputation for hard work, shrewd judgment and attention to detail make a welcome contrast to Ronald Reagan's happy-go-lucky style, which produced the current mess. The last two presidents were elected for their ability to inspire rather than to govern. If the country is now ready for someone with

Stephen Chapman

a knack for the more prosaic demands of high office, Dole fills the bill.

No one doubts Dole's talents as a legislator, honed over 26 years in Congress. Respected on both sides of the aisle as majority and now minority leader, he has been instrumental in the passage of any number of measures, from the 1983 Social Security bailout to last year's tax reform bill. His ability isn't limited to running interference for Reagan. In 1982, as Finance Committee chairman, he forced the White House to back off from its vows and go along with a bill providing for a sizable tax increase.

But Dole's strength is also his weakness. Success on Capitol Hill requires frequent compromise, and compromise doesn't excite Republican voters. What they want is ideology, something to which Dole seems allergic. Although he supports Reagan on most matters—keeping tax rates down, aiding the Contras, proceeding with Star Wars, averting protectionism—he is a conservative more by temperament than by philosophy.

This manifests itself not only in votes for food stamps and programs for the handicapped but in a general refusal to view the world through an ideological lens. If you asked Reagan what he's achieved in office, he'd talk about unleashing free enterprise and making America strong. If you asked New York Gov. Mario Cuomo what he's done, he'd talk about helping the weak and strengthening the sense of community. When you ask Dole, he talks about "providing leadership, solving problems, handling tough issues."

He is easily irritated on this subject. In a recent speech in Dallas, Dole mocked the charge that he lacks a vision: "Do I have a vision? You've got to have a vision to run for president. So you're going to have a vision. . . . We're just not going to have it yet." Not the stuff of inspiration, even for the GOP's less conservative voters.

Dole has other obstacles. It is his task to prove that a Washington insider can be elected president. Since 1924, only one president (John F. Kennedy) has gone directly from Congress to the White House. The Senate is regarded by senators as the training ground for presidents, but voters don't agree. Recent campaign trails have been littered with senators who faltered—George McGovern, Edmund Muskie, Henry Jackson, Edward Kennedy, Howard Baker, Gary Hart, Walter Mondale and, don't forget, Bob Dole, who got nowhere in 1980.

What makes 1988 different for Dole? It helps that Reagan isn't running, and that neither Jack Kemp nor Pat Robertson appears to have Reagan's ability to energize true believers without alienating everyone else. Dole's best hope is to be what Richard Nixon was in 1968—a candidate acceptable to all the party's elements, though inspiring to none.

But Dole could just as easily fall victim to the error made by other senators, namely assuming that one's stature in Washington translates into votes in Iowa or New Hampshire. The ability to make the machinery of government function may be the main consideration in choosing a sewer commissioner or even a representative in Congress, but when it comes to presidents, Americans expect more.

Dole is the quintessential Washington insider at a time when that image may help instead of hurt. If he expects to be president, though, he has to offer something more than the promise of a well-managed White House. Dole has demonstrated that he knows how to govern, but he has yet to show that he knows why.

Page 2—The Russell Daily News, Tuesday, March 3, 1987

Dole Exploratory Panel Forming

—Ellsworth Calls Race 'Wide Open'

By STEVE GERSTEL
WASHINGTON (UPI) — Senate Republican leader Robert Dole formed an exploratory campaign committee today for a probable 1988 presidential try, and his national chairman called the race for the GOP nomination "wide open."

Former Rep. Robert Ellsworth, the committee chairman, said "Vice President Bush is the 'front runner and favorite'" and added that Bush and Dole are the two candidates "taken most seriously."

Ellsworth said all the possible candidates for the Republican nomination have "potential" but added that, on the basis of polls, Rep. Jack Kemp of New York has

not yet been accepted "on a wide-spread basis" as a serious challenger.

He also said that former Secretary of State Alexander Haig and former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld are "not factors" at this stage of the campaign.

Ellsworth announced the formation of the exploratory committee at a news conference. Dole was not present.

In a letter to Ellsworth, Dole said, "As you know, I have not made a final decision on whether or not to seek the presidency. However, my interests are well known, and I agree that establishment of an exploratory committee at this time is most appropriate."

The naming of an exploratory committee is almost always the

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prelude to formal announcement of a candidacy, and the senator now beginning his fourth term has given every indication he is ready for a second run at the White House.

Dole planned to announce today his committee would be run by his close friend Bob Ellsworth, a former Kansas congressman, deputy defense secretary and U.S. Ambassador to NATO.

Dole, 63, was the 1976 vice presidential candidate and sought the presidency in 1980 only to be routed by Ronald Reagan. But many times last year, and in the first months of this year, he has traveled to Iowa, which holds the first caucuses, and New Hampshire, which has the first primary, as well as to other states as an undeclared but potential contender for the nomination.

Dole enjoyed extensive media exposure as Senate GOP leader for the last two years, when his party had majority control of the chamber, and since the Iran arms-contras aid scandal erupted in November he has moved ahead of Vice President George Bush in Iowa polls even while trailing in New Hampshire.

Dole is expected to name James Murphy, a former executive assistant to Sen. Gordon Humphreys, R-M.I., as his campaign manager for New England, and Tom Synhorst, chief political strategist for Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, as his Midwest manager.

Others expected to join the Dole campaign are William Lacy, a former White House aide; David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union; and Donald Devine, the former Office of Personnel Management director who has run Dole's political action committee since last year.

Still in question is a possible role for John Sears, who was ousted as Reagan's campaign manager during the 1980 pre-convention battle. Sears reportedly has told Dole he would like to run his 1988 campaign but only if Dole agrees to his central idea of strategy.

CAMPAIGN PORTRAIT

Survivor On the Track

Dole plugs conservatism with compassion

One of the few Republican beneficiaries of the Transcan affair has been Kansas Senator Robert Dole, thrust into the role of hot candidate even as his fledgling campaign apparatus goes through birth pangs. This is the third in a series of profiles of the major 1988 contenders.

For Bob Dole, the most ordinary tasks pose extraordinary challenges. Buttoning his shirt, for example. Because there is no feeling in the tip of his left thumb and forefinger, he nips the buttons by sight and gingerly guides them through the holes; each one can take ten minutes. In public appearances, he clasps a pen in his clawlike right hand to ward off aggressive hand-



At the capitol in Topeka; pragmatism rooted in Midwestern tradition

shakers who have not noticed his withered arm as they crowd around him, thrusting scraps of paper and clamoring for autographs. He responds patiently. "I'm not a very good writer"—and laboriously signs with his left hand, which he learned to write with after coming home to Russell, Kans., a horribly wounded veteran of the war against Nazi Germany. It took three years, seven operations and months in a plaster cast that encased him from neck to waist for him to recover. Compared with that ordeal, says Dole's younger brother Kenny, "running for President will be a piece of cake for Bob."

At 63, Robert Joseph Dole, the small-town Kansan who rose to become Republican leader in the U.S. Senate, is a remarkable survivor not only of war but of politics. Despite losses in two prior bids for national office, he has steadily been rising in the polls for the Republican presidential nomination. Yet he still faces formidable obstacles in the 1988 presidential campaign. He has been known as an acerbic Washington insider, a pragmatic, conservative man for all seasons during his 18 years in the Senate. Can such a candidate project a vision of the country's future that will satisfy both the distrustful right-wing ideologues he needs to win the Republican nomination and the more moderate voters whose support could sweep him into the White House?

So far, there has been a curious hesitancy about Dole's campaign, raising questions about his managerial skills and decisiveness. A bumbling organizational effort in the 1980 race doomed his run for the nomination before it got off the ground, and this time too he has been slow to establish the kind of political operation that could consolidate his current popularity. He has yet to unveil a timetable for resigning as Senate leader to commit himself full time to the trail or decide what role John Sears, a respected Republican political pro detested by the extreme right, will

play in his campaign. In January, after Dole had been quoted as saying he had discussed with his wife Elizabeth the possibility that she would quit her job and join his campaign, she confronted him: "How can you say that," she asked, "when you haven't even decided if you are going to run?" She happens to be Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Transportation, and some political observers suspect that if either member of this power couple becomes President, it may be she.

In part, Dole's hesitation stems from his Midwestern reserve. With his vibrant voice, handsome face and extraordinary energy, he can dominate a large room with an aura of apparent self-confidence, but in one-on-one conversations he is surprisingly guarded. He often uses one-liners to deflect questions he does not want to answer. When he forgoes the quips, his replies are carefully phrased to neutralize any hint of boastfulness. He seldom initiates talk about the broken neck and shattered shoulder he suffered in combat with the Germans in Italy's Po Valley in 1945. But if pressed, he can movingly recollect how his neighbors took up collections that helped pay for his operations. Privately, Dole comes across as somewhat ambivalent about running for President, as though unalloyed ambition were a touch unseemly. As he puts it, "I have drive, but I'm not driven. Destiny's a pretty lolly word for me. I don't know whether I'm destined to do anything. Maybe right now is as far as I'm going to go."

To liven his campaign speeches, Dole rattles off jokes, rapid-fire, like a string of firecrackers. But while he maintains that "I use humor to wake people up," he has often used it to cut them up. In 1974 he barely won re-election to the Senate over Dr. William Roy, a Topeka obstetrician, in one of the nastiest campaigns in Kansas history.

Says Roy, who shares Dole's flair for vindictive rhetoric: "He was a slasher and a cutter. You almost felt he cut for the pleasure of cutting." Recalling how Dole ranted about "Democrat wars" when he was Gerald Ford's vice-presidential running mate, some analysts still argue that his hot and highly partisan rhetoric has cost the GOP the White House in 1976.

The criticisms clearly stung. Since 1976 Dole has worked hard to shed the hatchet-man image. "I've done a lot of soul searching," he says. "I think a lot of the criticism was unfounded. I don't dislike people. I'm a very friendly person, not mean or vicious. But you take a look at how you're perceived, and obviously you riage to Elizabeth, he has mellowed, replacing the hatchet with a stiletto. As often as not these days, he makes himself the butt of his own jokes. Reflecting on the 1976 campaign, he quips, "My assignment was to go for the jugular, and I did—my own."

With his wit under control, Dole faces the more serious test of outlining the priorities of a Dole Administration. So far, he has provided little more than a legislative shopping list of proposals for dealing with the deficit, trade and other matters. Even supporters suggest that Dole's immersion in the details of legislation has blocked the mental leap to a broad-gauge view of national leadership required of a presidential candidate. Says his political consultant David Keene: "Legislative experience teaches you to be tactical and think on an ad hoc basis. He's got to reach inside himself and talk about what he believes and what he sees for the country." Characteristically, Dole's response is a quip: "Your vision might be 20-20 today, but a few months from now, you might find that you need contacts."

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Focusing his vision will not be easy for Dole because his record is ideologically blurred. He strongly espouses a conservative agenda, ranging from unflinching backing for the Contras to support for a constitutional amendment allowing school prayer. But he escapes easy pigeonholing by talking the language of pragmatism: common-sense efforts to deal with serious social problems and the need to show courage by looking at Social Security and other entitlement programs in reducing the deficit. Dole's conservatism is deeply rooted in the tradition of independence in the small-town Midwest he is too flexible to ignite the anti-Establishment passions that fire up the purists on the Republican right.

This has strained his relationship with the hard-core right-wingers known as "movement conservatives." They have not forgotten that he joined with George McGovern to champion the food-stamp program and led the Senate battle to create a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. They have never forgiven Dole, as Senate Finance chairman, for pushing through a \$98.3 billion tax increase in 1982 that was followed by a \$50 billion hike in 1984. Those efforts to reduce the federal deficits so incensed supply-side economic advocates that Georgia Congressman Newt Gingrich branded Dole "the tax collector for the welfare state." Though lately Dole has been mending fences with the movement conservatives, he often shows his annoyance. Says he, "I think

what they want is a cheerleader. It's not enough to be with them on the issues."

As the quintessential Washington insider, Dole of necessity stresses as a virtue his congressional experience (he has been on the Hill ever since he was elected to Congress in 1960, after serving as county attorney in Russell). "I think we've had Carter the outsider, Reagan the outsider," says Dole. "I think, at least I hope, that those of us who've demonstrated a little experience—that we can make things happen, that we're innovative, that we can bring people together—may have a little edge." In the wake of Transcan and the stirrings of renewed concern about social problems, he hopes that voters will find the mix that he offers—combative conservatism combined with compassion, pragmatism and experience—a formula for leadership in the post-Reagan era.

In recent speeches, Dole has been testing one theme in particular. The Republicans, he says, must "reassert that we are a sensitive, compassionate, caring party" that can address the problems of the aged, the homeless and the chronically unemployed, but less expensively and with less governmental regulation than Democrats have employed in the past. "I think you can be a conservative," he says, "and still try to address human problems." Because of his own experiences, that is a case Dole can convincingly make.

—By Jack E. White