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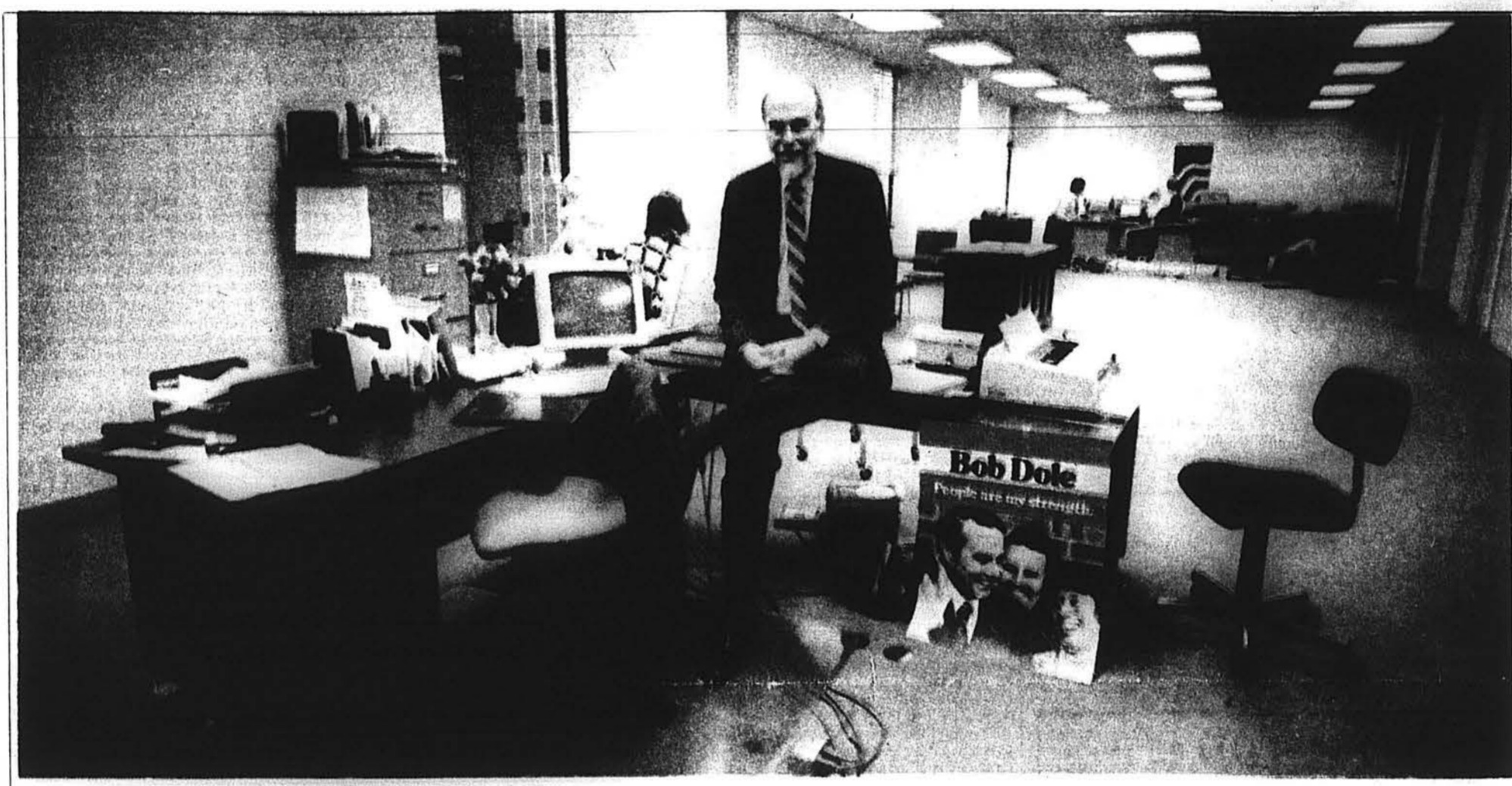
The Sunday Magazine Section of the Topeka Capital-Journal

Once more into the breach:

Bob Dole for president



The Dole for President Exploratory Committee is just getting squared away in a downtown Washington office. Topeka still holds the sign identifying the tenants.



As the Dole for President headquarters begins to take shape around him, old Dole crony Robert Ellsworth is assembling key members of the '87-'88 campaign team. He says he has a free hand.

Building a grassroots organization for a shot at the nation's highest office

Except for the fact that he is so short, young Eric Cote could pose for a Marine recruiting poster: square-jawed, handsome, well-groomed, trim and muscular.

The 1986 University of Rhode Island graduate stood almost at attention behind his desk in the barely-furnished quarters of the "Dole for President Exploratory Committee" in downtown Washington, D.C., and explained his job.

Cote comes in at 7 a.m. or earlier each day and clips all the pertinent news stories in four morning papers for incorporation into a daily summary which will be handed out at a morning staff meeting about 8:30. All other employees also will get a copy by an hour later.

He spends the rest of the day coordinating the activities of the 20-plus workers in the fast-expanding Dole headquarters.

"He just came in one day and did it," explained Topekan Kirk Clinkenbeard, the DFPEC treasurer.

Cote is typical of the team Kansas senior Sen. Bob Dole and his hand-picked quarterback, former Rep. Robert Ellsworth, are assembling in this still-undeclared campaign to win the nation's highest elective office. Almost without exception they are young, attractive, presentable, bright, hard-working — and passionately dedicated to politics.

The exception is Ellsworth, a 60-year-old Lawrence native who forswore active politics years ago in favor of the investment world — but the rest of the adjectives apply.

Ellsworth, who lives 40 miles outside Washington and runs "a very conservative venture capital business" these days, said his involvement in Dole's 1988 campaign for the presidency began with a meeting last fall between him and the then-Senate majority leader, at which Dole asked him to head up this committee.

The two men had been friends and political colleagues for 25 years. Ellsworth explained — the reason Dole came to him. "He said, 'I trust you.' And he also said, 'You don't have any other (political) agenda but my interest — do you?' And I said, 'No.'"

Topekan Kirk Clinkenbeard is the DFPEC treasurer. He expects to handle \$27 million during the Dole presidential primary campaign.



A wall sports a picture of Vice President George Bush (another undeclared candidate) — wearing a Dole button!



by GENE SMITH
photos by
THAD ALLTON

Though still not a declared candidate for the nation's highest office, Kansas' Sen. Bob Dole is beginning to talk more and more like one.

Ellsworth is a lean man with wise eyes, a gray beard and an aloof, calculating manner; a middle-of-the-road Republican who represented the old 2nd District in Kansas from 1961-67, was political director of Richard Nixon's '68 campaign and later served in appointive posts in both the Nixon and Ford administrations.

Among other things, Ellsworth was best man at Dole's 1979 wedding to Elizabeth Hanford, now Secretary of Transportation and the only woman in the Reagan Cabinet.

His selection to head the DFPEC, and later rumors about internal squabbling for position with

in the committee's ranks, led to speculation that Dole is dumping old conservative allies in favor of more moderate advisers, or that Ellsworth is intended to be the referee among key aides.

But such speculation sells Bob Dole short.

Certainly no citizen in America yearns to be President more than 63-year-old Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, late of Russell, Kan., the 10th Mountain Division, Topeka's Washburn University School of Law, the Republican National Committee chairmanship and various points in between.

And he is a team player, a good soldier. Thus, when Gerald Ford picked him as the Vice Presidential candidate, detailed him as the campaign's verbal gunslinger (a role for which he is eminently suited by his quick, acerbic wit) and ordered him to sally forth and shoot it out with the enemy, Bob Dole saluted, marched off — and efficiently gunned down every political opponent in sight, even at the detriment of his own career.

Just last week, as Senate Republican leader, Dole made Herculean efforts to sustain Ronald Reagan's crumbling veto of the popular (and expensive) highway construction bill. He failed; in part because the measure promises to provide needed jobs in the flat economy of most states, in part because it raises the unpopular 55 m.p.h. speed limit to 65 on rural highways.

But, having said that, anyone who tries to predict Bob Dole's position on a particular issue is spitting into the wind.

Often the darling of the G.O.P. conservative wing, Dole also is a chief architect of the food stamp program, for example — one of the most expensive social programs in the history of government. The truth is, left to his own devices, Bob Dole is a maverick: an independent who calls the plays as he sees them. Certainly, as the commander in chief of his own political campaign, he can be expected to continue to do so.

At the same time, Ellsworth concedes there was

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