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Aide Margie Mannix is busy while Dole, known as a tough boss, appears on TV.

Union," he tells audiences, "and I don't think we should ever accept any agreement with the Soviet leadership based on trust."

The unspoken issue of the Dole campaign is Dole himself.

The first question that arises is his health. He received devastating wounds in World War II and spent more than three years fighting for his life. He lacks any real use of his right arm and suffers lingering numbness in the left hand he must often when handshaking on the hustings.

However, at 63, he probably is better conditioned than most of his generation. His 6-foot-3-inch frame is full but firm. He keeps up a pace of work and campaigning that would stagger men half his age.

Friends urge him to make political use of his war hero background, which most of the public does not know about. But he says it makes him uncomfortable to trade on it. When he tries to force it, his emotional pain is evident. But when it comes up naturally, as it sometimes does, it is a heavy weapon — such as when a college student recently accused him of sounding pro-war.

"I think if anybody has learned in this whole race what war means, I think I'm No. 1. I get the trophy," he retorted so fast the young woman swayed backward in her chair. "I spent 39 months in hospitals after World War II and I was not that bad off. I wouldn't want it to happen to anybody else. And I'm one of the lucky ones. I've seen people in my ward who weren't there in the morning. And I wasn't any older than you are when I went off to war."

His Republican colleagues, at least, generally vouch for his claim to leadership

ability. Sparks have been known to fly between Dole and his Democratic counterpart on the Senate floor, Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, but considering the highly competitive and partisan nature of both men it has not been remarkable.

"I just look on him as a legislator," says Alan K. Simpson of Wyoming, No. 2 to Dole in the Republican Senate leadership as GOP whip. "He's like people who like to do the cruddy work of hearings and markups and slog along through it, amendments and then floor management and conference committees."

Many people groomed on Dole's staff have a reputation as a tough man to work for. They have gone on to positions with prestigious Washington law firms and government agencies.

And there's Dole the compromiser and capitol. "He has great ability to bring people together," says Sen. Arlen Specter, who graduated from the same high school as Dole in Russell, Kan. (see story, Page 17). "I've seen him work out compromises on the tax bill and on the civil rights bill," says the Pennsylvania Republican. "I was on the Judiciary [Committee] with him when we passed voting rights extension. He can go into a tough issue and pull a lot of disparate views together."

The most damaging issue facing Dole is the lingering bad image from the 1976 campaign in which he was President Gerald R. Ford's running mate. In his nationally televised debate with Democrat Walter F. Mondale, Dole tried to win with the stinging wit that characterizes him.

Dole tried such zingers as Carter "has three positions on everything. That's why they're having three TV debates," and suggested labor leader George Meany "was probably Sen. Mondale's makeup man."

It was not funny. And when he tried to lay responsibility for the wars of the 20th century on the Democrats, the backlash was killing.

Forgotten about that campaign, though, is that his humorous style came across better when he was out among the people. He was charged with carrying the Farmbelt for the ticket, and he did. Down more than 30 points in the polls at the start of the campaign, the Ford-Dole ticket finished within two points of Carter-Mondale.

The Dole style still is based largely on humor, and the crowds buy it. Whether it is as subdued from the past as some contend is debatable. But people do laugh. When he drops an occasional quip among the duller issues in a long speech, people laugh. That shows two things: They think he's funny, and they were listening to the serious stuff, too, or they would not have been alert enough to hear the joke.

Organizationally, Dole has a long way to go. He has had a political action committee for years, but he did not form his exploratory campaign committee until February. The formal announcement of candidacy is set for late summer or early fall. Still, Ellsworth and staff are piecing together a businesslike cadre in the early states.

The strategy dictates itself: Dole is a Midwesterner from a farm state, Iowa is both Midwestern and farm. So is South Dakota, another early primary state. New Hampshire, site of the first primary, is not Midwestern but it does have the small-town feel of his native state. The next step is Super Tuesday, March 8, when 20 states, most of them in the South, hold primaries or caucuses. With a strong agricultural background (and a Southern woe), he hopes to do well in the South. By the end of the day nearly half the presidential nominating convention delegates will be chosen and the race may be over.

Dole ran for president briefly in 1980. The organization was bad. Ronald Reagan was running away with the field. Dole cut his losses and dropped out early. Maybe it's the kind of thing you'd want to forget, but he uses it in this race.

"I remember coming to Iowa many times in '79 and '80," he says in the hamlet of Spencer and just about everywhere else he speaks. "A lot of you said, 'Well, you're a nice fella, but you ought to wait awhile. This isn't really your time. Why don't you come back later?'"

"So, here I am," he says. "I'm back. And it's later."

—Don McLeod in Iowa with Robert Dole

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A gunner at Camp Breckenridge, 1944

shoulder and fractured a vertebra. The shock to his spinal cord paralyzed all four limbs. He had no control of bowel or bladder functions.

He spent most of the next 39 months in hospitals. More than once his family was told he was dying. Complication followed complication. He lost one kidney, sustained damage to the other, fought off blood clots in his lungs that tried to take his life.

Bob Dole fought. He forced exercise routines that made his friends teary. He ran. He fell. He picked himself up. He willed himself strong again. His right shoulder would never be whole again, but a neurosurgeon in Chicago with a new technique relieved the paralysis and restored some use of the arm.

The surgeon donated his services, and the people of Russell raised money to help with the other expenses. They put nickels, dimes and wadded bills into cigar boxes stationed around town. Dole still has one in his desk.

Most of the world never knew much about this until President Gerald R. Ford and Dole, his running mate, chose Russell as the place to launch their 1976 campaign. Introducing the president to his hometown, Dole said with the nation watching, "I can recall when I needed help, the people of Russell helped." And then he wept.

Kenny Dole is not at all surprised. "He feels like the town has opened up its heart for him and he could never repay them. And I think he'll live to the day he dies trying to repay Russell, Kansas."

Chief among the myths about Bob Dole is that he married the Army nurse who saved his life and then, years later and politically powerful, left her. It simply did not happen that way. Yet the story has a grain of truth — the eventual divorce —

"That took courage. To shake hands and have people notice that he couldn't shake hands with his right hand."

and is so enticing that even people who should know better repeat it.

Dole had been in various hospitals for three years when he met Phyllis Holden at an Army hospital officers club in Battle Creek, Mich. She was not a nurse; she was an occupational therapist. He was never her patient. But her training did give her an appreciation for what he was feeling as he anticipated a return to the outside world. In three months he was released from the hospital and they married.

"He was in another section of the hospital, and it was only three months at the end of a 39-month stay for him. I didn't save his life. That's ridiculous," Phyllis says now, with some heat.

"I'm sure there were some ways I helped him after we were married. Probably the most important thing I did, looking back, was not treating him as handicapped but treating him as normal. I knew when to ask if he needed help, when not to."

It also is said that he is hypersensitive and shuns assistance. But she says, "I think that's a little overblown, too. I think one has to be somewhat subtle. I think what it has to do with is not pressuring him to help him. To perhaps notice if he needs a little bit of assistance and do it quietly without making an issue of it. I'd be the same way."

One of the first problems the couple encountered was the difficulty he had cutting steak in restaurant. "We learned early on to have it done in the kitchen," Phyllis says. Today, one would have to look very closely at the distinguished speaker at a head table to notice that his plate is always served with the meat cut. Staff aides are almost magically adept at helping with his coat at the right instant or slipping a supporting hand under an article offered for his autograph. Anyone who follows him and watches knows he accepts help graciously.

"I've got to confess," he says. "I think there was a time when I, you know, you get depressed because you can't do things. I don't mean you go into a depression, but you're frustrated and you want to get angry with yourself. And I have dropped things, and dropped glasses and spilled water and things of that sort, years ago when my left hand wasn't as strong as it is now. And you know when you've got to have somebody help you dress and undress when you go to the bathroom, you go back to those years, now that gets pretty touchy sometimes. So, I think there probably was a time there when I just had not quite half recovered when I got maybe a little too independent for my own good. Sometimes people just want to be helpful. If I've got something

heavy to carry, I can't do that. It'd be pretty hard for me to hang wallpaper."

And with this he has made another point about Bob Dole. He would much rather laugh at a problem than cry over it. Pat Lynch, who was one of his nurses, says even when he was totally paralyzed she would wheel him around to the other wards to cheer up the other patients.

"He's not hesitant about asking for help when he needs it and when he wants it," says longtime friend Bob Ellsworth. "But on the other hand, he has learned, as we all have as we go through life, that in the final analysis you're on your own. He learned that earlier and harder than most of us."

And although Dole has almost no use of his right arm and limited use of a still-numb left hand, he says he does not consider himself handicapped. "Others do. I don't."

What did emerge in his character after the accident, though, might be attributed to a fateful combination of the Kansas-bred work ethic and frustration. He became a workaholic.



Exercise helped recovery (1949 photo).

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COVER STORY PART 2

The Grass Roots Senator Who Never Left Kansas

SUMMARY: Robert Dole has been a part of Washington politics since his election in 1960, yet his words and deeds show that his mind is still in Kansas. The Senate minority leader has never forgotten the locals who raised money to help pay his medical bills after a debilitating war injury. And when he returns, he makes the rounds of friends and shut-ins — who still call him Bob.

Kenny Dole says he once heard his brother say the following: "There's doers and there's doers. You know, you take your pick. These guys who sit around saying what're we going to do while the plane's coming down don't help you much. Do something. Get off of your butt and get out there. You know, something."

In April 1945, his brother went and did something from which he was determined later to recover. And the stoic tenacity with which he pursued his recovery, the stoic tenacity with which he has pursued his political career (much of it, Kenny says, a result of their father's stoicism) is the prevailing fact about Robert J. Dole even now.

A basketball star at his hometown high school in Russell, Kan., and a basketball, football and track standout at the University of Kansas, the young athlete enlisted in the Army in December 1942, halfway through his sophomore year in college.

But he almost spent the war caught up in the Army's bureaucratic machinery. After medical corps training and engineering training and antitank gunnery training and officer candidate school, he wound up in a replacement depot in Italy. On Feb. 25, 1945, he was assigned to I Company, 3rd Battalion, 85th Mountain Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division.

The division originally had been packed with skiing enthusiasts, future Olympic athletes and Ivy League elites. Specially trained for years in Alpine and Nordic skiing, climbing and fighting, they would make the final assault on formidable German defenses ranged across the peaks and crests of northern Italy's Apennines. But at the tail end of the war, the Army needed Kansans who had grown to manhood with-

out ever seeing a mountain a platoon leader for crack mountain troops.

At the group's most recent reunion, Dole cracked, "I couldn't get into the 10th Mountain Division when it first started; you had to have letters of recommendation. I was able to get in later when you didn't need much at all except to go in the direction they told you to go."

For that, Kansas had trained him well. "That was his job," says Al Nencioni, who was a sergeant in Dole's company. "The lieutenant was the leader. And that was the problem with World War II, and that's why the lieutenants didn't last long, because they had to show the men. And he did. He would go out, and when he had to do something — I can't say that for all the lieutenants we had, but he did — he went to do the job."

2nd Lt. Robert Dole led 2nd Platoon, I Company into the 10th's final action of the war April 14, 1945. "It was the worst day our company ever had," Nencioni says.

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"We lost about three-fourths of the men, killed, wounded or missing."

I Company had to take Hill 913. Dole led his platoon out of a thick hedgerow and into a clearing below the hill. Automatic weapons fire raked the line. Men fell. Others scrambled for shell holes, any cover. Dole squirmed out and retrieved his fallen radioman. Then he moved boldly out, as he was supposed to, into the clearing, toward the unseen enemy.

He did not get far. A mortar report says it was a shell, maybe a mortar round. Dole says he thinks machine-gun fire. Whatever it was, his right shoulder seemed to explode. Disobeying orders, Stanley Kuschick, now in command as platoon sergeant, paused to pull Dole to cover, administered morphine and marked a letter M on the lieutenant's forehead with his own blood so the medics, if they found him, would not give an overdose.

For eight hours Dole lay there unable to move. Whatever hit him had shattered his

Making a good impression in Sioux City: Iowa is site of nation's first caucus.



The Kansas-bred work ethic took Dole from Russell to the nation's capital.

the same serene conviction with which they plant their crops and go to church, appear convinced he has not forgotten his roots and Huck Boyd's advice. But one casualty of the Washington move was his marriage. He just told her one day that he wanted out. He already had arranged it with his lawyer under a Kansas law that provides for divorce without the usual waiting period.

"I went to my lawyer the next day," she says. "I knew if Bob Dole ever walked, he'd not turn back, because I know he makes decisions and follows through. And I don't think that's a bad attitude to have."

The suddenness was painful, his former wife says, "but I know now that that's the only way to go. It would have been much worse had it been dragged out."

Phyllis and Bob generally agree their marriage died from a lack of communication, although she says she had resigned herself to the role of wife of a politician who was never at home. She, too, was active, though not as much as he. She was vice president of the Congressional Club, an organization of congressional wives.

She occasionally runs into the senator at

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