

Candidate Dole cultivates good-guy image

WASHINGTON (AP) — Home-town roots and heartfelt dreams, humble beginnings and horrific war wounds have always been part of Bob Dole's past. But until lately, they didn't loom large in his present.

As the Kansas senator prepares to announce his bid for the Republican presidential nomination on Monday, Dole is bringing his background into the foreground — a Depression-era childhood, the World War II machine-gun fire that shattered his arm and shoulder in 1945, the three agonizing years he spent recuperating in hospitals, partially paralyzed and near death from medical complications.

A dozen years ago, when he was running for vice president, Dole earned a reputation as a hatchet man — sharp-tongued, sarcastic, even downright mean. As leader of the Senate Republicans, Dole has been strong, partisan and quick with the caustic quip.

But as a 1988 presidential candidate, Dole is trying to project an image of warmth and humanity even as he stresses his toughness. At the GOP candidates' first debate in Houston two weeks ago, Dole said he deliberately refrained from attack.

"I wanted to bury the hatchet," he said. "I wanted to dispel any idea that people may have ... that I was coming in there as a gun-slinger."

The Dole campaign's videotape shows him overcome with emotion, weeping as he thanked hometown friends in Russell, Kan., who helped with his rehabilitation from his war wounds. The video dwells at lyrical length on his family's struggle to get by in hard times.

The Dole campaign has even gone so far as to provide reporters with a list of suggested interviewees in Russell — a homey assortment ranging from his old football coach to his Aunt Gladys.

Not surprisingly, these folks tend to talk about Bob Dole's humor, his kindness.

"He's got my father's dry wit," says Dole's sister Gloria Nelson, 66, a retired hairdresser. "He can always make us laugh."

"Anyone who asked him for help would get it," says brother Kenny Dole, 63. "He really feels for people, and he knows how to get things done."

Of course, the Dole campaign isn't about to undercut the reputation for toughness he built from the beginnings of his congressional career in 1960, through his stint as majority leader and now minority leader in the Senate.

The campaign video features supporter Sen. Steve Symms, R-Idaho, talking about how Dole's "backbone of steel" makes him the best man to deal with "Soviet dictators."

Dole's wife, Elizabeth, campaigning full-time after stepping down as transportation secretary, likes to tell audiences that despite her husband's role as a powerful Washington insider, dealing daily with his disability has made him a caring and compassionate person.

His right arm is nearly useless. Getting dressed in the morning can take an hour. Someone has to cut his meat. When he campaigns in a crowd, he thrusts out his left hand for shaking.

"I just want to suggest to you that when you fight adversity of that sort, serious adversity, and you battle your way back, you develop an inner strength, you can take almost anything. ... I think it also enhances your sensitivity for the problems of others," Liddy Dole told an audience in Iowa recently. Mrs. Dole, a North Carolina-born,

Harvard-educated lawyer who blends caniness and charm, is widely viewed as having helped soften some of her husband's rough edges during the course of their dozen-year marriage. With characteristic tact, though, she refrains from claiming credit.

Dole was once known — and feared — for his acid wit. A staunch defender of President Nixon during the Watergate investigation, he lashed out at critics of the administration. During the 1976 campaign, some said his harsh attacks on the opposing Carter-Mondale team might actually have lost votes for Dole's own running mate, Gerald Ford.

These days, Dole is more likely to turn his humor on himself, with self-deprecating quips. Official Washington loved it when he and Liddy traded one-liners in public.

In the midst of a controversy over whether air bags should be required in cars, she quipped, "I should know

a lot about air bags. After all, I married one."

Dole likes to tell how a magazine photo of them making the bed together drew a complaint from an irate constituent who didn't want to be roped into household chores on Bob Dole's account. "Buster," Dole says he replied, "the only reason she was helping was because they were taking pictures."

Some like to suggest that a good-guy image is a political asset. But others say his transformation goes beyond a public relations ploy.

George McGovern has said that the Bob Dole he knew in the early 1970s was "tough and mean." But later the two became friends, despite their political differences. McGovern said in 1982 that Dole had changed "on personal and psychological levels."

But the dark side of Bob Dole still rises occasionally, as when he suggested in September that Central American leaders wouldn't object if

someone "blew away" Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega.

Dole, 64, has thrown himself into this race enthusiastically, despite the fact that he doesn't have a lot of pleasant presidential campaign memories. After his losing bid as Gerald Ford's running mate in 1976, he ran for president in 1980, but did poorly in the primaries and withdrew early.

Dole's campaign video makes no mention of his first wife, Phyllis, a physiotherapist he married after he was released from the hospital, and divorced after 23 years of marriage.

But even the former Mrs. Dole says he's the best man for the job. She has told reporters she still admires the determination he showed as he learned to write with his left hand, taped his law school lectures and transcribed them at night, and learned to type one-handed.

"He doesn't know how to do a job halfway," she says. "I think he'd make a great president."

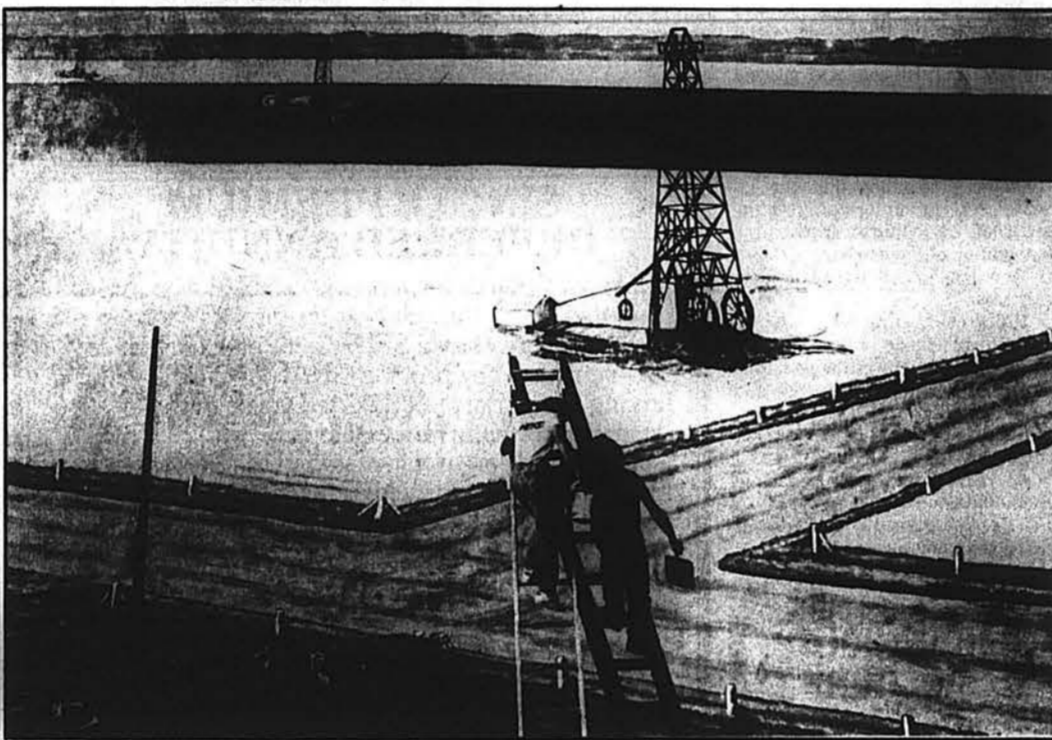


Photo by Jim Evans

Kirk Werth, Loretta, climbs down for more paint while working on Russell's mural. He is an employee of Buck Arnold, a Hays artist commissioned to paint the scene, which should be nearly completed Monday.

Russell readies for Monday festivities

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Several peace groups, including Kansans Against Contra Aid, Salina's Center for Peace Concerns and the McPherson Women's International League for Peace and Freedom will be in Russell to protest. The National Organization for Women and Right to Life is sending contingents.

Dole has announced executive branch aspirations twice before from Russell locations. On Aug. 20, 1976, with two days' notice, then Vice President Gerald Ford and Dole announced their presidential and vice-presidential intentions from the Courthouse lawn. Three thousand people attended; a plaque commemorates the spot.

In 1979, Dole launched a short-lived campaign, to grab the 1980 Republican nomination from Ronald Reagan, from a location at Eighth and Maple, a block from where he will announce Monday. Six thousand showed up.

This time around, Russell residents and Republicans in most states give Dole a solid shot to grab

the nomination. His hometown and Dole staffers have been preparing for the announcement for months.

Russell motels are filled, and many motels in Hays and Great Bend are booked solid.

Meanwhile, Russell has gone bananas for Dole. On Friday, workers welded 4-inch oil-field pipe to make the platform from which Dole will speak, while across the street from the announcement site, Hays artist Buck Arnold put finishing touches on a 30-by-102-foot mural. While workers scramble all day today and through the night to complete Main Street preparations, others began Saturday to prepare an alternate site at the high school in case of rain, but they had to wait until the Class 1-A State Volleyball Tournament was over.

Russell High School students consumed 50 pizzas Thursday while making banners and designing posters. The last touches will be prepared early Monday. A committee will gather at 4 a.m. to fill 10,000 balloons with helium. Coffee stands will be set up on Main Street, but no one is sure how the donuts

will be delivered through the crowd. Dole signs and posters are affixed to nearly every window on Main Street. Inside the windows, displays of Dole memorabilia take the place of merchandise.

The town is running out of Dole caps, pins and buttons and Dole limestone fence posts. The most popular campaign pin, now impossible to get, was designed by Dole's ex-wife, Phyllis Macey, who lives in Topeka.

From a display of 1941 issues of the Russell High Pony Express, curious out-of-towners could learn that Dole was voted the Girl's Ideal in 1941. George Baxter, Dole's old high school football coach, was puzzled by the "Girl's Choice" reference.

"I can't remember him being bothered by girls very much," he said.

What he did remember was a 1941 victory by the Russell football team over Great Bend.

"I sure remember those two long passes," he said.

Dole caught them.

Hutch News 11-8

A man who would be president

Bob Dole learned — and kept — a never-say-die attitude

By Tim Hoyt

The Hutchinson News
Central Kansas Bureau, Great Bend

RUSSELL — Living across the street from the Dole family home on Maple Street in Russell, 82-year-old Mollie Krug remembers the Saturdays in 1935 when she would leave for work about the same time young Bob Dole and his brother, Kenny, would head for their jobs downtown.

"I'd get to the corner of the block and here they'd come running out the back door," she said, pointing out that Bob, then 12, was heading for Dawson's Drug Store and his job as a soda jerk, while Kenny, 14 months younger, had work waiting at his father's cream and egg business.

"Bob always called back to say goodbye," Ms. Krug said. "He was always in the lead; Bob stood out; he was tall and walked very straight."

"Bob was a deep thinker. I used to think, 'I wonder what he's planning?'"

In the 52 years since Ms. Krug made those observations, Bob Dole has done a bit of thinking and planning, probably more than his



White House photo

As one of the top leaders in the Senate, Dole frequently meets with President Reagan.

former neighbor envisioned.

When Dole steps onto a platform at 8th and Main in Russell Monday to formally announce his candidacy for the office of president of the United

States, he carries with him 36 years of experience as an elected officeholder. Beginning with his two-year term as a Kansas legislator in 1951, Dole has been chosen as the people's

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representative in 13 elections, the last four as a Republican U.S. senator.

But when Dole speaks to the American people Monday, he also will be carrying with him what he learned right here in Russell.

That accumulated knowledge includes what his hard-working parents and grandparents instilled in him as they fought through tough economic times, what teachers, coaches and friends showed him about life as he grew up, and what circumstances — including a near-fatal battlefield injury — have forever imprinted on him.

Each of Dole's three siblings talks about the ordinariness of their upbringing. And probably, for the times, they're right.

But the growing-up years for Gloria, Bob, Kenny and Norma Jean Dole were not ordinary years in the United States. Each was born during the decade when the

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