

292. 1987

In the 1930s, his family struggled with the rest of the world to make ends meet. In the 1940s, he struggled for his life — and won. Now, after a 37-year career in politics, he puts his name on the line for the highest office in the land.

DOLE

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Great Depression began, and their teen-age years — the "dirty '30s" — brought wind-whipped dust from cropland Kansas farms blowing through their hometown of Russell.

G.B. Dawson, whose family owned the Dawson Drug Store at 808 Main where Dole worked, remembers it as a time when dust clouds came in so thick from the west everyone thought rainstorms were approaching.

"You'd think, 'Oh boy, it's gonna rain.' Then it would be another dust storm," he said.

Dawson, who at age 70 is six years older than Bob Dole, remembers that in the 1930s "everybody was poor but nobody knew it."

During the Depression and dust-bowl years, the mettle of many American families was tested.

But it was also a time when children learned firsthand what it took to meet that test. That toughness, the ability to "pick up and go on," as Gloria Nelson, the oldest of the Dole children, put it in a recent interview, is a trait apparent in the Dole family.

"Nobody bailed out. My folks were like that; they accepted things," Mrs. Nelson said.

"There's always been a way."

The root of that toughness also is apparent as each of Bob's siblings talks with pride about the strength of purpose shown by their parents, who, with never-ending hustle, were able to see the family through.

When Bob was asked in a recent debate whose picture he would place in the White House should he be elected president, he listed a number of presidents. But he ended his answer by saying he would also place a picture of his mother and father, Doran and Bina Dole, on that White House wall.

Bob, like his brother and sisters, genuinely likes to talk about his Russell upbringing and the work his parents did to raise their family.

Doran and Bina Dole, both of whom are deceased, came from far-from-rich rural families. That genealogy may explain why later the parents were constantly pushing to keep their family well-fed and well-dressed, or why Doran is said to have not missed more than one day of work in 40 years.

Doran Dole's parents, Robert and Margaret Dole, were tenant farmers who, during the height of the Depression, had to receive government aid to keep afloat. Bina's mother and father, Joseph and Elva Talbott, lost their 320-acre farm when they could not pay off a \$1,100 bank note.

"After they foreclosed, the guy that bought it found nine oil wells, good oil wells, on it," said Kenny Dole, who now runs an oil field leasing company.

When Doran and Bina Dole were first married, they, too, went through an economic shock. Doran had started a restaurant, the White Front Cafe, in Russell before the marriage.

Their wedding dinner was served there," Kenny said, pointing out in a photograph the table where they ate their first meal as man and wife. But he said the White Front Cafe closed soon after that.

"It didn't last long. All his buddies would come in and they ate up all the groceries. They couldn't pay."

Doran and Bina started the cream and egg business in 1920. "They'd sell cream, eggs, hides, batteries, chicken feed ... anything to make a nickel," Kenny said.

While Doran Dole ran the creamery, which later was merged with the grain elevator business in Russell, his wife helped make ends meet by giving sewing lessons and selling sewing machines for a company in Hays.

Norma Jean Steele, at 61 the youngest of the Dole children, remembers going with her mother to farms around Russell to deliver sewing machines.

"They were the big, treadle-type machine," she said. "We'd load up the machine and go to farms. They usually planned on us being there, so they'd help unload."

Of her mother, Mrs. Steele said, "You just couldn't stop her. She made everything we wore: boys and girls. She was quite a seamstress."

It was when the Dole children

were young that their grandmother Elva died, leaving five children at home for Joseph to raise. Kenny Dole said his mother took responsibility for some of the care of those children.

Gloria said, "Things were rough after grandmother died. Mother helped where she could. He'd drop a boy and girl off for us to keep for a week, and a couple of the girls stayed with Mom and Dad during high school."

It was during the Dole children's younger years that their parents made a decision that may have saved the family home in Russell. Kenny said that when he came home from his seventh-grade class one day, his mother told him the family would be moving to the basement, and the upstairs would be rented out.

"Oil companies were coming in all over Russell and renting from people," he said. "So they made the decision to rent the upstairs. They wrote Dad a check for \$1,200 in advance."

Kenny Dole said all six people in their family lived for that year in the basement. Gloria said that when they first moved down, "it was just cement walls, with the washer and dryer in one corner."

But Kenny said his dad put up partitions, and he and Bob had a little bedroom in one corner.

"We took a little ribbing from kids at school," he said. "But we'd have lost the home if we hadn't done it. We never questioned our folks. Nothing was said after Mother said, 'Take your belongings and go to the basement.'"

The hustle showed by Bina and Doran Dole rubbed off. Just like their parents, each of the Dole children became an impressive worker.

While Gloria and Norma Jean talk about the 10-cent-an-hour baby-sitting jobs they took on, which usually also involved doing a bushel basket full of ironing and cooking a meal, Kenny Dole proudly lists a string of jobs he and his brother took on as youngsters.

"We'd go out and hustle up work, we didn't wait until somebody called," he said. "We'd clean up somebody's yard at night and get 30 cents and a couple of cookies and a glass of Kool-Aid. 'We hustled; we didn't go home after school and sit and wait for supper.'"

Kenny remembers work he and Bob took on when the train arrived in Russell with carloads filled with bags of cement for the local lumber company.

"We'd get a penny a sack; we'd unload it onto a truck, then take it off the truck into the warehouse," he said. "There were several carloads. It was man's work, but we'd do it. We'd work weekends and after school, when we weren't working for Dad."

Another job Kenny said he and Bob took on was selling Cloverine Salve. "We'd order the stuff out of comic books; we'd get several dozen of them," he said. "You make a profit if you just sell two of them. It was supposed to cure everything."

Bob also worked delivering newspapers for The Salina Journal, while Kenny passed out handbills all over town.

"I got \$2 to cover the whole town, and all the cars parked downtown," Kenny said. "It was a lot of walking for a seventh grader."

Dawson, who, with his family, has been a close friend of the Doles for years, said Bob did good work both with his hands and with his conversation at the drugstore.

"In those days, you have to realize, the drugstore was the social center of town. The people who would go downtown to shop, all the kids after school ... everybody met there."

"We hired him at the drugstore; he was a very popular young man," Dawson said. "Then, we'd give curb service. Bob was a good worker, and he had a sly wit, even then. He could dish it out and take it as well as anyone."

But showing pragmatism at a young age, Bob didn't stay at Dawson's Drug Store. He was making \$2 a week as a soda jerk, but when the competition across the street offered him \$1 more, he moved on, Dawson said.



Above: Dole, suffering from war wounds, lies in a hospital bed at Winter General Hospital in Topeka in 1945. Top: Dole, fourth from left, poses with his high school basketball team in 1939. Far right: Dole poses with his mother and father on the steps of the Capitol in 1963.



K. Dole G. Nelson



fell for a squadron commander at an air base near school and decided to send Bob's pin back to him.

"It came down to a 'Dear John' letter," Mrs. West said. "Of course, I sent Bob's pin back and a letter of explanation. He phoned and said, 'Don't do this until you see me again,' but I'd pretty well made up my mind."

Mrs. West, who is remarried after her first husband, the squadron commander, died, said despite the "Dear John" letter she sent, she and Dole have remained friends.

"I still like him; he's a good friend. He's was as witty then as he is now. Wit just rolls off his tongue."

That same pride that shows when Gloria, Kenny and Norma Jean talk about the strength of purpose shown by their parents is also apparent when they speak of their brother and his return from the war.

That brother, their remembrances show, all but came back from the dead more than once after a German bullet or mortar round — no one knows for sure — severely shattered his right shoulder.

According to Gladys Friesen, Bob's aunt, Bob was hit April 14, 1945, while with the 10th Mountain Division in Italy.

"It shattered his right shoulder, broke his neck. He lost a kidney and fought off a severe lung infection," she said. "It's a wonder he made it."

After months in hospitals overseas, Dole was admitted to Winter General Hospital in Topeka.

His sister Norma Jean, now Norma Jean Steele of Wichita, was in school in Springfield, Mo., when she got the news that Bob was being brought to Topeka. She traveled to Topeka to meet her mother at the hospital.

"He looked horrible," she said. "He was in a body cast, but he had the nurse place a locket over the cast for mother. Even then, he was thinking of everybody else."

After Bob was able to make a short visit home to Russell — a visit that saw the boy who had left home a 6-foot-2, 192-pound award-winning athlete come back weighing only 120 pounds — he returned to Topeka and became very ill.

Norma Jean, now back home in Russell, remembers phone calls from the hospital urging them to come quickly because Bob was dying.

She said she and her dad "drove fast, fast, fast" down the highway to make it to Topeka in time.

It was after he returned to the hospital in Topeka that Bob began suffering from kidney infection and kidney stones. But after his right kidney was removed, he began once again to improve.

He was then transferred to Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Mich., where a severe lung infection he developed put him near death again.

Kenny Dole, who served in the army in the South Pacific and who had overcome malaria, said he arrived home from active service and left the next day to see Bob in Battle Creek.

"He was lying in bed, and pus was running out of his fingers, all 10 of them," Kenny said. "He was rotten to the core. He could move his eyes, but otherwise he was totally paralyzed."

Kenny said a colonel at the hospital asked him to sign a release allowing them to use an experimental drug called streptomycin. Kenny called his parents, who agreed.

It worked, stopping the infection.

"Within five days, Bob sat up," Kenny Dole said. "He has never looked back since."

Despite getting rid of the infection, however, Bob still had trouble with walking and his right shoulder and arm were completely useless. A fellow patient told him of a surgeon in Chicago who might be able to restore his shoulder and arm, and the doctor agreed to do the work for free.

Before the operation, Dole went home again to Russell. When home, his determination to overcome his injuries was apparent to his family and other townsfolk.

"He'd have to use his left hand to eat; I remember once he left the table" in frustration because of his disability, Gloria said. "I can remember he seemed so determined ... he'd work and work."

When the townspeople found out that Bob was going to Chicago for an operation, they got behind a drive by the Russell Veterans of Foreign Wars post to raise money to cover expenses.

Dawson said boxes for the fund were set up in the drugstore and the bank.

"Everybody took up the idea," he said. "The war was just over, and Bob had almost died several times. We'd get word all the time on him from his mom and dad. They even had articles in the newspaper on his progress."

"Bob still tells the story about

one man giving \$100 and another lady gave a nickel because that's all she could afford," Dawson said. "He has never forgotten that."

In Chicago, a series of three operations eventually was successful, and Dole regained partial use of his right arm. He would never be the basketball star he once was, but after all he had gone through, he had other sights in mind.

He went back to college, at the University of Arizona, and then received a law degree in 1952 from Washburn Municipal University in Topeka. He was elected to the Kansas House of Representatives in 1950 while still in school and was chosen Russell County attorney four times until he was elected to Congress in 1960.

It was during his four terms as county attorney that Dole's hard-working ways showed up again. Dawson said he would close down the drugstore at 11 p.m., look up to the courthouse and see the lights still burning in the county attorney's office.

Kenny Dole said Bob would be up at the courthouse "working all night long. They certainly got their money's worth out of that county attorney."

LeRoy Foote, the custodian at the courthouse during Dole's years there, said Dole "always treated me like a friend."

Foote, 72, cannot use his right hand because of infantile paralysis. He said Dole would stop and talk to him every time they saw each other in the hallways.

"We had a lot in common," Foote said. "I'd run errands for him, take care of his office. He seemed like a son to me, to tell the truth."

Dole was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1968. In that race, and all the others, his family and friends were out campaigning for him.

Dawson, Kenny Dole and Gloria each mentioned going out and tacking up posters for Bob in all his elections. And Gloria said their mother also was out on the streets pushing for votes.

"Bina, she campaigned like a trooper," Gloria said. "She went into some places that weren't so nice."

Monday, Bob Dole begins another battle.

"Like he said to me, 'I've lost 10 years of my life, and I'm going to get it back,'" Kenny Dole said. "He acts like he hasn't gotten a day of it back yet ... he's a go-getter."