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Dole 'perplexes' insiders

Kansan worries some Democrats

BY PETER A. BROWN
Scripps Howard News Service

RUSSELL — Senate Republican leader Bob Dole, who formally enters the presidential race here Monday, is the candidate most feared by Democrats and most puzzling to Republicans.



Dole Democrats think Dole's pragmatic reputation, experience, quick wit and humble origins make him the toughest candidate to beat. They feel he can appeal to independents and Democrats.

"I think Dole will be the nominee, not (Vice President George) Bush, and will be a very strong candidate," says Michigan Gov. Jim Blanchard, head of the Democratic governors. But GOP strategists, armed with polls showing voters are fixated on the future, don't understand why Dole has yet to offer any vision of what his presidency would be like. Dole cites polls showing voters want competency, which he considers his strong suit because of his Washington expertise.

And some insiders are perplexed why Dole spends a good deal of time telling generally conservative Republicans — those who vote most often in primaries — that the party needs to change its image, rather than throwing them the standard right-wing rhetoric.

Mitch Daniels, who was President Reagan's top political aide until he resigned to run the Hudson Institute, thinks Dole's strategy is a smart one. "It sets him apart," said Daniels, who's neutral in the nomination fight. "He's establishing a different, unique identity within the primary process, and that is very important. I think it's very wise because the identity he's establishing would be very appealing in a general election."

Dole's record is difficult to categorize. He's gone down the line for such conservative causes as funding the Nicaraguan contras and backing President Reagan's controversial judicial nominations and constitu-

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Russell prepares to welcome Dole home

RUSSELL (AP) — As he has in each of his political campaigns, Sen. Bob Dole returns this weekend to his grassroots-America hometown to declare his bid for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination.

And as it has many times before, Russell will warmly embrace its famous native son, then give him a rousing send-off as he heads into his biggest political battle yet.

Dole has run for the presidency before, but this time he has a chance of winning the nomination and the office. He really had little hope in 1980, when a belated effort to stop Ronald Reagan's drive to the GOP nomination never got off the ground.

Lack of financial support was a big drawback for Dole in 1980. It isn't this time around. His campaign fund — already past the \$8 million mark — will get a \$100,000 boost here Monday.

That amount of money, collected throughout

Kansas, will be presented to Dole in the same cigar box that was used 40 years ago to solicit donations for him in Russell while he recovered from war wounds.

Dole, who observed his 64th birthday in July, is scheduled to arrive with his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Robin, late Sunday, and spend the night in the brick family home just off Maple Street. His formal announcement will come amid homemade hoopla in front of Rogers' Old Dawson Drug Store at the corner of Eighth and Main Streets.

He'll make his speech from a 14-by-18 foot blue platform stage built just for the occasion by townspeople. It was moved into the middle of Main Street Friday. There will be school children in nearby bleachers, singing "God Bless America."

The band of Russell High School, where Dole graduated in 1941, will play and the Russell High School Pops Choir will sing. Several thousand townspeople and visitors will

crowd onto Main Street to hear Dole's speech and cheer him on. Dignitaries will include Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum, U.S. Rep. Pat Roberts and Gov. Mike Hayden.

On a sunsplashed May morning eight years ago, Dole stood in the middle of his hometown and announced his first presidential bid.

"There ought to be at least one place for every person where he or she is accepted with unjudging love and strengthened and reassured by it, and for me that place is here," Dole said.

A similar tribute to his hometown is expected Monday before Dole races off to Iowa and New Hampshire for more campaigning.

Russell is a community of 5,400. Its economy has been hard hit in recent years by the problems of the domestic oil industry and agriculture. It always has gone all out in its support of Bob Dole, a wounded war hero who came back to this town to rebuild his shattered life after World War II.

Dole

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tional amendments to ban abortion and allow school prayer.

Yet he champions programs for the disabled he's got only limited use of his right arm due to a World War II wound. He also backs civil rights legislation and nutrition programs for the poor.

Never a true believer in Reagan's adopted "supply-side economics," Dole has made it clear he thinks deficits must be eliminated, even if taxes have to be raised. That's an anathema in some GOP circles.

"It's not going to be easy," Dole tells audiences. "So beware of those who come to you and say, 'Don't worry about it (the deficit). It will take care of itself.'"

"What I am saying to people across America is this: 'If you don't want to make these hard choices, then I'm probably not your candidate,' because hard choices are what we face."

Dole believes that competence, experience and toughness — "in the sense of willingness to take some heat" — are going to be factors in the campaign.

It is widely agreed that he has the best chance of defeating front-runner Bush for the Republican nomination. He runs second to Bush in national polls, and he runs even with the vice president or ahead of him in some key early contests.

Dole's candidacy is keyed to beating Bush in Iowa, where the Feb. 8 caucuses have traditionally begun the delegate-selection system. And Dole hopes a likely Bush defeat in Michigan, held the week before the Iowa caucuses, will slow the vice president's momentum.

The senator has a priceless political asset in his wife Elizabeth, former secretary of transportation. She's a savvy politician and campaigner in her own right, and she's working effectively for him in her native South.

Dole goes out of his way to stress the contrasts between himself and Bush.

"I've been talking about who Bob Dole is, where he's from, what he's all about," Dole said. "There are some contrasts between myself and the vice president. My resume may not be quite as long, but I've been making decisions, and Bush really hasn't been since he left Congress in 1970."

"I have to believe that obviously we have vastly different backgrounds — where we are from, how we were raised, what we were raised with."

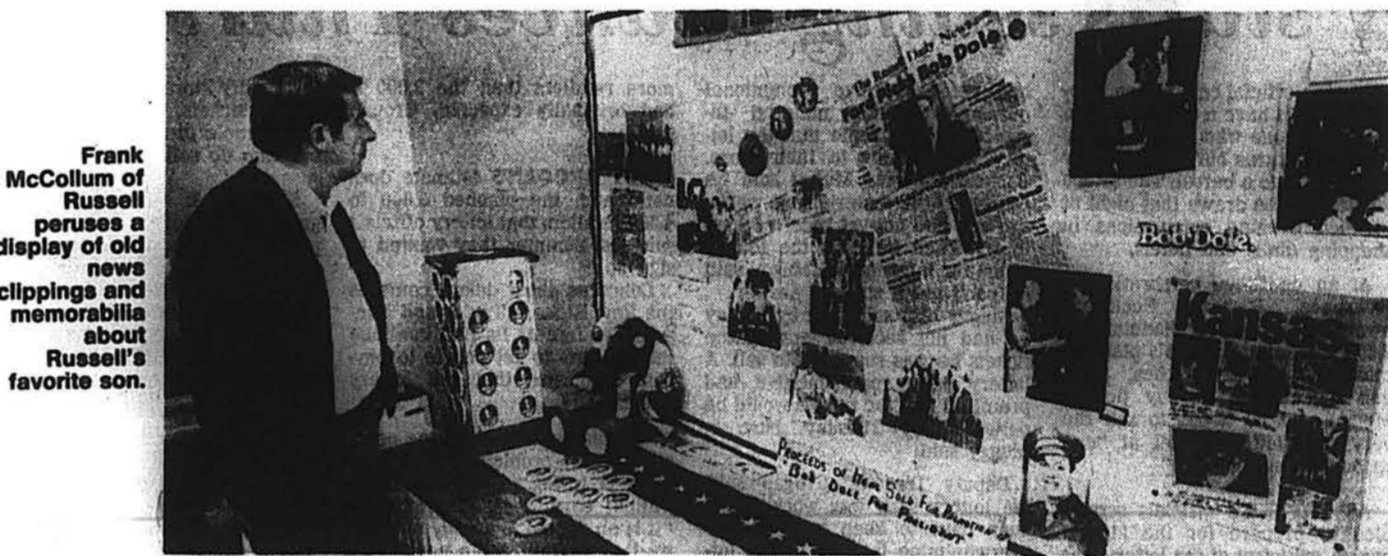
Bush is generally earnest but a bit dull; Dole's sharp wit sometimes turns off voters who think he's a wise guy. Bush is tied to Reagan, whether he likes it or not; Dole likes to point out, "I have a record of support for this president, but when I disagree, I disagree."

"A lot of people comment Bush doesn't come across forcefully," said a big-state GOP chairman who's across as a hard-charger, his voice is deeper, his mannerisms are stronger. "But, the chairman added, Dole 'doesn't say a whole lot' about what he would do as president."

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THE WICHITA EAGLE-BEACON

The Dole announcement



Frank McCollum of Russell peruses a display of old news clippings and memorabilia about Russell's favorite son.

Mike Hubmacher/Staff Photographer

Brock joins Dole as bid's pace quickens

By Angela Herrin
Of our Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — When Bill Brock showed up for his first day on the job at Dole campaign headquarters last week, the staff asked whether he wanted the good news or the bad news first.

"The good news is that the campaign has so many workers and volunteers there's no place to sit," Brock reports.

"The bad news is that I'm the one who is supposed to go find them some place to sit."

Along with searching for office space, Brock, who left his post as secretary of labor to become chairman of Bob Dole's presidential bid, describes his first days as so busy that "I've been running like a scalded dog."

The 56-year-old Tennessean has stepped into the job at a crucial time. The campaign pace is accelerating, fund-raising is in high gear, and as the primaries loom, Dole, a Russell Republican, must make his political transition from a Senate strategist to a potential president who can lay out a clear picture of what he stands for and where he would lead the country.

"BOB HAS demonstrated his leadership on the Senate floor on a daily basis, but now, starting with the announcement, he's got to define his own program," Brock said.

"We've established him as one of the two contenders for the nomination; from here we focus on why you should vote for Bob Dole."

Dole's low-key performance in the GOP candidates debate in



Brock Dole's fund-raising is "looking pretty good."

Houston — one political writer joked that Dole looked as though "he had been maintaining Nutrasweet" — has been criticized for its failure to sharpen Dole's "presidential" image or his stand on issues.

In a TV interview last week, Dole said he deliberately adopted a subdued tone in his answers in Houston. "I wanted to show I wasn't a gunslinger ... to dispel this hatchetman image ... hanging around after 1976," Dole said. "(Now) I'm ready to debate Bush, one-on-one, no holds barred."

Brock called Dole's performance an example of "just holding your powder until you need it."

"HE DID what he set out to do," Brock said. "Bob doesn't have to concentrate on drawing sharp comparisons with other candidates to sharpen his image."

In fund-raising and organization, Brock says he found Dole's campaign "looking pretty good." The campaign has raised \$10.4 million to date, compared with more than \$13 million raised by Vice President George Bush. A group of 125 high-dollar donors, who pledged to raise \$50,000 each — without ask-

ing Dole to attend a fund-raising event — have brought in more than \$3.5 million. A round of \$1,000-a-ticket dinners is under way, with a banquet in Los Angeles raising more than \$1.1 million last week.

Dole now claims organizations in 37 states, including two key states, Brock says Dole has been buoyed by the endorsement — and help of the organizations — of two popular Republican senators, Charles Grassley in Iowa and, more recently, Warren Rudman in New Hampshire.

"You can see a difference in New Hampshire for us just in the two weeks since Rudman traveled the state with Bob," Brock said.

HOWEVER, BROCK is keenly aware that every poll in the past six weeks still shows a gap yawning between the Kansas Republican and the front-runner Bush.

The Atlanta Constitution's poll, for instance, found that Bush had a commanding 27-point lead over Dole in 12 Southern states. Nationally, a Newsweek poll in October found Bush leading Dole, 41 percent to 24 percent.

"We're not where we want to be — but we think the numbers show we are on the rise, while others are trying to maintain their position," Brock said.

To overcome the Bush advantage in organization and name recognition nationwide, Dole's campaign settled on the strategy of investing effort heavily in early primary states such as Hawaii,

South Dakota, Wyoming, Minnesota and South Carolina. These states have not been as prominent as Iowa or New Hampshire on the primary calendar, but victories there could have important payoffs.

For instance, victory in Hawaii — the site of the first 1988 Republican caucus on Jan. 27 — will deliver only 25 delegates to the winner. But if he wins there as expected — "If I can't win in Hawaii with a name like Dole, who can't?" he jokes — Dole will garner valuable media attention.

THAT WIN also would allow Dole to head into the Iowa caucuses claiming a victory, without entering into the battle for delegates in Michigan's confusing caucus process that has pitted Bush forces and the supporters of Rep. Jack Kemp, R-N.Y., and Pat Robertson.

The campaign hopes to roll such victories, along with strong showings in Iowa and New Hampshire, into a strong momentum carrying Dole into the March 8 Super Tuesday primary, when voters in 20 states go to the polls.

Kansas Republicans have done their part to boost Dole's prospects by moving up their caucuses from June to March. They are expected to deliver Dole 34 delegates on the eve of Super Tuesday, the same day that South Carolina Republicans hold their primary.

"We're not going to leave any stone unturned," Brock said. "We don't expect to win all the primaries, but you have to have those early wins."