

311. 1987

The Salina Journal

114th year — No. 314

Salina, Kansas TUESDAY November 10, 1987

25 Cents

Dole officially begins White House quest

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING
Great Plains Editor

RUSSELL — Standing on a stage near the drug store where he worked as a teen-ager, Sen. Bob Dole promised Monday to make a difference in the lives of ordinary Americans. "I offer a record, not a resume," said Dole, as he officially declared himself a candidate for the Republican nomination for president. "I can make a difference, I have made a difference, and I will make a difference."

More than 7,000 people crowded into downtown Russell, at the corner of Eighth and Main, for the announcement. The mood was festive, the air was brisk.

Many were wrapped in blankets to protect themselves from the chilly November temperatures and wind. Still, at least two people collapsed during the announcement ceremonies.

Local supporters walked through the audience passing out tiny cloth sunflowers, "Dole for President" signs and small American flags.

Hanging over the streets were large banners that read: "Russell's gift to America — Bob Dole for President" and "From the Heartland of America — Bob Dole for President."

On a stage flanked by grade school students, cadets from Salina's St. John's Military School and others, Dole — as he has in previous speeches — talked about his hometown of Russell. Specifically, Dole talked about a time 40 years ago when residents here raised enough money to pay the doctor who pried his right arm together after a war injury.

"That generosity helped reshape my life," Dole said. "I came here today because my home is at the core of everything that I believe about America. Our families, our neighbors, our communities were at the center of everything we did."

"The goodness of the people of

Russell over the years has been the source of my inspiration and my strength. I have carried the spirit of this place with me throughout my life.

"I offer the hopes of a lifetime rooted here in western Kansas. I offer common sense answers to complex problems."

Dole, 64, said that in his first week as president he would call a meeting between administration officials and Congressional leaders about a balanced budget.

"The federal deficit is the single greatest threat to a prosperous and dynamic America," Dole said. "We do not expand opportunity when we burden our children with debt from our own self indulgence."

Dole said he would "go over the head" of Congress and call a constitutional convention if he couldn't get a balanced budget amendment any other way.

Other issues he addressed: ■ "Free and open" trade: "We must not have the delusion that if we build trade walls high enough we can shut out a flood of foreign-made products, but neither must we play the patsy."

■ Education: "At home, education must be at the top of our priority list. We must re-emphasize English, mathematics and science. In the highly competitive world of the 1990s, we cannot afford to squander a single talent."

Dole said he would support merit pay for teachers and financial support for needy students. But Dole said he would not support abortion.

"We must remember our nation's commitment cannot end in the classroom."

■ Health: Dole added this to his list of priorities, saying health-care programs must be geared toward more prenatal care and the growing center of everything we did.

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rank of elderly.

■ Defense: "America has become strong again, but we must keep our guard up. Hence, a strong national defense."

At the same time, "it is high time for those who owe their security to American military might to assume their rightful roles and bear their rightful burdens in the defense of their common interests."

Dole said he also supported the Strategic Defense Initiative, something he called "our best insurance policy" for the future.

The U.S. senator said he was willing to negotiate an arms treaty with the Soviet Union — but only if a balance of conventional forces is involved. Dole said he also wanted on the negotiating table the Soviets' treatment of Jews, Poles and other nationalities and countries.

"Freedom will be invincible not only for America but for all humanity," Dole said.

The senator's talk was punctuated by cheers and shouts of "Go Bob Dole."

He was joined on stage by his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Robin. Other speakers included fellow Republicans Gov. Mike Hayden, U.S. Rep. Pat Roberts, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum and Marie Boyd, wife of the late McDill "Huck" Boyd, a Phillipsburg newspaper publisher and longtime Dole friend.

"Bob Dole has truly brought the world to western Kansas," said Hayden, who compared the senator with Kansas Dwight Eisenhower, Alf Landon and Huck Boyd.

"All of these people had outstanding leadership skills. They also had that Kansas upbringing that they never lost

touch with the grassroots. They are gone, but they have left us a legacy. No one has carried out that legacy with more pride and skill than Bob Dole."

Kassebaum said Dole has spent his life preparing for the presidency. She praised his ability to draw different viewpoints together for a consensus.

As for Dole's hometown, "In a sense, Russell is what this campaign is all about. It's about farmers and storekeepers and workers and bankers," she said.

G.B. "Bub" Dawson, former co-owner of the drug store where Dole worked, gave the senator the cigar box in which residents contributed their nickels and dimes to send Dole to the doctor for his war injuries.

"I can recall this cigar box on the counter of the drug store with Bob Dole's name on it," Dawson said. "When Bob went to Congress, he took this cigar box with him and put it on his desk to remind him of the generosity of the people of Russell."

Monday, Dawson returned the box to Dole. It contained about \$100,000 from Kansas supporters and the "good wishes of the people of Russell," Dawson said.

In return, Dole handed the city of Russell \$10,000 from an anonymous donor for the "poor people" in town.

After the political speeches and after his announcement, Dole looked out over the audience and said he was confident he would be the next president of the United States.

The remark was greeted with cheers from the audience, the blare of band music and the release of 10,000 blue and yellow balloons.

Supporters rise to the occasion for Dole's kickoff



Kim Leibbrandt (left), Russell; Derenda Mitchell, Topeka; Robin Hixson, Russell; and Louise McCord, Russell, blow up balloons during the pre-dawn darkness.

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING
Great Plains Editor

RUSSELL — Bill Korf and his three daughters left Oakley at 4 a.m. Monday to watch history in the making.

A little more than two hours later, they were in Russell waiting for Kansas Sen. Bob Dole to announce his candidacy for president.

The girls — Melissa, 8, Becky, 11, and Carrie, 13 — sat in the dark in lawn chairs. Shielding them from temperatures in the 20s and a stiff north wind were heavy coats and blankets.

"This is probably as close as we'll ever get to a famous person," said Korf, a pastor who forgot to bring a chair for himself. "If Bob Dole gets elected president, the girls will be able to say they saw it. It's a history lesson, that's the main thing. I like history."

A little settled his daughters for the wait — the announcement ceremony didn't begin until 8:30 a.m. — local volunteers finished last-minute chores.

A block north of the stage where Dole was to speak, Carol Dawson and a crew of more than 30 formed a balloon assembly line. In

the unbeated warehouse of Krug Feed and Supply, teams pumped helium into the balloons and then put them into large blue release bags.

The balloons — some 10,000 in all — were to be released at the end of the announcement ceremony.

For some workers, the day started before 4 a.m. Others, like Dawson, hadn't gone to bed.

"I was the person they called and asked to be in charge of the balloons," Dawson said. "I didn't know then what they were talking about."

Helping her with the effort was Mike Baker, who provided the balloons and equipment to inflate them from his Kansas City business.

He arrived in Russell about 1 a.m. and spent some time reading before beginning work on the balloons.

"I have the feeling we're at the beginning of a snowball," Baker said of Dole's announcement. "We can sleep tomorrow."

In the warehouse, Helen Hulse, a former Russell resident who moved to Plainville in 1979, was home to watch the ceremony —

and pump balloons for Bob Dole. "I love every bit of this," said Hulse, 72. "I knew Bob Dole before he ever went into politics. I have no doubts he will be our next president."

As the hour of the announcement moved closer, people begin to fill the intersection of Eighth and Main. Many waved signs: "Missouri for Dole," "Ohio for Dole," "California for Dole."

Sitting in the bleachers to the side of the stage was Frank Cabrera of Lompoc, Calif. He traveled 3,500 miles to support Dole and visit his friend's hometown.

"Bob Dole has integrity toward everybody," Cabrera said. "His background, his experience. ... He's a gentleman and a super individual."

Cabrera, who supported Richard Nixon in 1968 and Ronald Reagan in 1980, said he backs winners, and Dole is a winner. So is his town and state, Cabrera said.

"This is a beautiful place," he said. "I love the food. I love the people. I love

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everything." However, not everyone was as impressed as Cabrera with Dole or his politics.

Near Interstate 70, which passes by Russell, members of the American Agriculture Movement parked a tractor and grain truck with "Dump Dole" written on the side.

AAM spokesman Stephen Anderson of Alma even carted a wheelbarrow of manure to downtown Russell. It was his statement on national farm policy.

The AAM farmers were joined by other protesters, about 100 in all, who opposed aid to the Nicaraguan contras and disagreed with Dole on other issues.

They were well in the minority, though. More than 2,000 school children — smiling, singing and waving small American flags — sat in bleachers and watched the ceremony as Russell High School musicians provided music and chants, including "Eat 'em up, eat 'em up, go Bob Dole."

School started about 20 minutes early Monday so students could leave at 8 a.m. for the announcement.

Nancy Lane, who teaches government to seniors, said her class was about to see government in action.

"The kids have been very enthusiastic," she said. "A lot of them have been active in



Melissa, 8, (left) Becky, 11, and Carrie Korf, 13, Oakley, claim their spots early.

this. Not too many times do you get to do something like this."

Then again, some residents simply were too busy to stop and enjoy the party their efforts had produced.

Tish Rogers, who along with Russell County Republican chairman Larry Ehrlich coordinated the event, spent most of the ceremony in Dawson's Drug Store, which she owns with her husband, Larry.

"Naturally it was an impressive speech. It came from an impressive man."

— John Golden
Goodland resident

"I never saw a thing out there, except what I saw on television," she said.

But Rogers wasn't upset about missing the Main Street party — although much of it came to her after the ceremony ended. Dozens of people crowded into the drug store for coffee, doughnuts and heat.

She was pleased nothing had gone wrong. "I'm really quite amazed," Rogers said.

Many of the drug store visitors gave Dole rave reviews for his speech.

"I loved it. It was a wonderful start," Rogers said. Added John Golden of Goodland: "He reached out and touched all Americans. Naturally it was an impressive speech. It came from an impressive man."