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DOLE: THE GOOD TRAITS CAN HURT

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## DOLE: Self-Reliance and Pragmatism Tied to His Upbringing

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He is tough. But he can be mean.

These traits have made him a successful and unapologetic insider. "My doctrine of government is that we've got to make it work," he said in an interview on his chartered campaign jet as it flew over the frozen Midwestern battleground where America's presidential politics begin. "People go out there and want to run against government. I am not one of them. Government means a lot of things to a lot of people. It means getting their Social Security check or their veterans' check. So my doctrine is, 'Let's make it work.'"

Robert Joseph Dole grew up in Kansas during the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. From his parents, he learned the value of hard work. He was gravely wounded in World War II. He fought to live, then struggled to rehabilitate himself. From his experience, he learned the importance, above all, of survival.

He became a state legislator, county prosecutor, congressman, senator, Republican Party chairman and vice presidential candidate. In the Senate, he has been chairman of the Finance Committee and majority leader. He is now minority leader. At every point, he has shown the traits he acquired from family and fate.

Bob Dole was born on July 22, 1923, in the only bedroom of a tiny house that boasted, in addition, just a living room and a kitchen.

It stood in Russell, 67 miles south and 14 miles west of the precise center of what were then the 48 contiguous United States. The town of Russell claimed 2,030 residents at the time. Most of them struggled hard with the unforgiving Great Plains for a living. Oftentimes the struggle, touch and go, was for survival.

At first, his father, Doran, and his mother, Bina, ran the White Front Cafe on Main Street. In time, the Doles moved into a larger, one-story brick home, at 1035 Maple St., then Bob and a brother and two sisters grew up. Then Doran Dole took over a cream and egg station. Farmers would bring their cream in large, metal cans. As manager, Doran Dole weighed it, bought it and shipped it on to market. He also handled eggs and other farm products. To make ends meet, he bootlegged whiskey.

Doran Dole was a stern man, not much given to emotion. "I think he was probably a pretty good disciplinarian," remembers Dean Banker, who was two years behind Bob Dole in school. When Bob turned 6, the stock market fell, and the nation tumbled into economic depression. That turned hard work into more, even harder work. "The only way to survive," says Russ Townsley, publisher of the Russell Daily News, "was to work at it. And by 'survive,' I mean right down to meat on the table."

The creamery closed so Doran Dole went to work at a grain elevator. From the day he was big enough to carry newspapers, Bob Dole sold the Salina Journal. He helped his father. The Dole children mowed lawns, washed cars, dug ditches and sold Cloverine Salve.

Bob's brother, Kenneth, and others, including Townsley, say that good work was not something that won any special honor. It was simply expected. "Their father didn't go around saying, 'Boy, you did a great job' or anything like that," Townsley recalls. "If the kids had done something that was really fine, then Dad would say, 'You did that right.' There was no lack of love, but there was not a lot of useless affection going on."

The importance that Bob's father placed on devotion to duties shows clearly in a bit of family lore—reported variously, but most recently by Noel Koch, a former Dole speech writer. It goes like this:

Bina Dole was ill, so Doran took charge of the youngsters. He arose one morning without paying any attention to the clock and woke them up. They protested, but he would have none of it. At the four children gathered for breakfast, he sent Bob to the grocery store for milk. Then Doran Dole looked at the clock, and he realized that it was only 3 a.m.

When Bob did not return, his father sent the other children back to bed and went out to search for him. He found him sitting alone in the darkness in front of the store, determined to wait until it opened.

Doran Dole missed but one day of work in 40 years. "He died in his overalls," Dean Banker says, exaggerating only a little.

A taciturn man of Midwestern reserve, Bob Dole's father nonetheless had a sense of humor. "Droll," recalls Theodora Banker, who is in her 80s, prefers to be called "Aunt Teddy" and is the reigning member of the Banker clan. "Straight-faced, you know. I mean, he would say something, and if you weren't paying attention, you would miss it. It was sort of a one-up on everybody."

"Midwest, flatland humor," Dean Banker says. "Sometimes it's pretty bitey."

Beneath it all, Doran Dole was a compassionate man. "When he was down at the creamery," Dean Banker says, "a farmer would come in, and they're supposed to get, say, \$3 for 20 gallons of cream, or milk, or whatever, and the farmer would say, 'I really need \$7.'"

"And Doran was liable to give him \$7 against his next can of cream. And it wouldn't come from the company. Doran would put it on his own tab."

Bina Dole worked just as hard. After she and her husband left the White Front Cafe, she drove around Russell and its surrounding farms in the family car selling Singer sewing machines and giving sewing lessons. "Quite a matriarch," Russ Townsley says. "Things happened the way she wanted." She figured, by one account, that Bob Dole needed a spanking once a week. She told him: "Can't never could do anything."

Still, Townsley says, she was "a real sweet gal."

Despite all the hard work, the Doles could not make it. Brother Kenny developed a bone disease that added to their bills. They were forced to rent out their house to new people who began arriving with the discovery of oil. The six Doles moved downstairs and lived in two rooms in their own basement.

It didn't help that their house was on the wrong side of the tracks.

"They did not have money," Dean Banker says, "or the big homes over there."

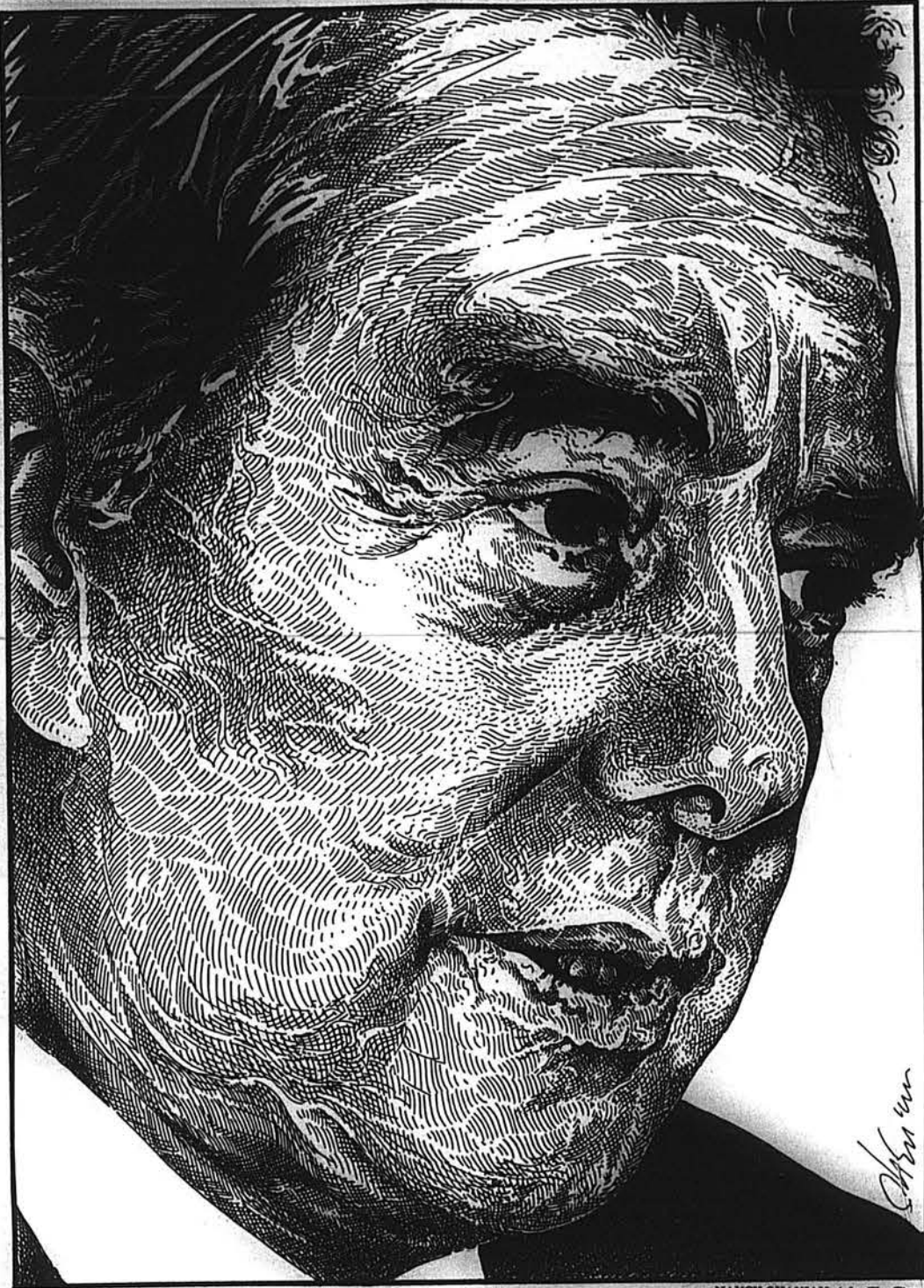
Nor did it help that in 1935, when Bob Dole was 12, the Great Plains literally blew away. That was the year of the Kansas Dust Bowl.

It was economically devastating. What would grow would not sell. "In the elevator business, it was damn tough with two-bit wheat and 25-cent oil. Two-bit wheat is not going to pay you to harvest it," Russ Townsley says. One of Bob Dole's grandfathers lost every acre—his entire farm. His other grandfather, who made his living as a tenant farmer, lost all of his crops.

Those were the years of mustard sandwiches. "That meant more mustard than meat," says Aunt Teddy Banker. "And onion and walk around. That used to be a Sunday night supper. That was an expression that meant you just sort of picked up whatever there was left and ate it. We would say, 'Let's have onion and walk around.'"

"Crops and hope alike refused to take root," Bob Dole recalls.

"It was tough," he has said more than once. But all of this taught him a permanent lesson: It is necessary to



NANCY O'HANIAN / for The Times

survive. "It was as if his survival-switch got turned on," says a former Dole aide, "and it never got turned off."

"I am," Bob Dole has declared, also on more than one occasion, "a survivor."

He went from carrying newspapers and doing odd jobs to working at Dawson's Drugstore.

The hours were long, but Bob Dole's switch had indeed, been turned on. He got up at 5:30 a.m., did his chores and went to school. After class, he worked at Dawson's until 11 p.m. or later, when the drugstore closed. He did it each day, including Saturdays and Sundays after church. He jerked sodas, and he clerked.

It taught him what Dean Banker says is the most important thing: If you're going to get along, you have got to get along. "It came from dealing with people. They were there buying coffee or Cokes or candy bars or Sal Hepatica or aspirin. Bob would wait on them."

"And he learned something else: how to talk to people. 'How's the wheat crop, Jake?' Because, you see, his dad, down at the elevator, wanted to know what he was hearing over at the drugstore."

"You going to buy any coal, Jake?"

"You bet!"

"So then his dad could tell the boys at Salina who owned the place, 'Well, maybe we need two carloads of coal.'"

"So Bob got a feeling for it"—what other people's interests were, what his own interests were and how deals could be made.

If hard work meant that Bob Dole had initiative, then in time he would gain ambition.

"He worked in the drugstore all through high school," Russ Townsley says. "And through the drugstore, I would imagine, he became a close friend of Dr. Fagin White, who was an old-time family

physician. . . . Bob decided he was going to be a doctor out of a small town. He had every intention of being a doctor."

But there was not a lot of extra cash available in the Dole household—and if he intended to be a doctor, he would have to do it on his own.

He belonged to the National Honor Society. But his main interest was sports. He lettered for three consecutive years in football, basketball and track. By one account, track was his favorite. In track, Bob Dole was out there all on his own.

"He was out to win," Aunt Teddy Banker remembers. "His coaches said that about him. He was a very competitive player, and he said you went in to play, and you played the best you knew how and took advantage of the breaks—and if somebody made a mistake, why, you were there to get it. You bet!"

"Bob left for the University of Kansas, where he enrolled in premed."

But the United States was fighting in Europe; and in 1942, during his sophomore year, he enlisted in the Army.

April 14, 1945, found him in Italy.

Bob Dole was 21 at the time. He was a second lieutenant, leading the 2nd Platoon of I Company in the 3rd Battalion, 55th Mountain Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division. It was studied with Ivy League champion skiers and future Olympic athletes, trained in mountain fighting and ready to make the final assault on German defenses in the Apennines.

They had plucked Bob Dole, a flatlander, out of an officer replacement depot.

Near the town of Castel D'Alano, he braved enemy fire to rescue a fallen radioman, and he was hit.

He remembers: "I felt a sting in my shoulder. And I must say my whole life raced in front of me. I saw my

dog, I saw my parents, I saw my family. I saw my hometown. Then I didn't see anything for a long, long time."

Commanders had told their men to leave the wounded. But Sgt. Stanley Kuschick, the platoon sergeant who took charge, decided to disobey the order. "The lieutenant was gray—the way they got before they died," he later told Noel Koch. "I could not just leave him there to die by himself." Kuschick and his men gave Dole some morphine. One dipped his finger into Bob Dole's blood and scrawled an "M" on his forehead, so he would not be given more—and overdosed. Then Kuschick told one of the men, Arthur McBryar, to stay behind with him.

"I figured," Kuschick said, "McBryar wouldn't have to wait long."

But Bob Dole lived.

It took nine hours for medics to reach him and carry him on a litter to the 15th Evacuation Hospital. There the doctors, too, thought he would die.

Their diagnosis: Whatever had hit his right shoulder had broken his collarbone and his shoulder bone behind it, as well as his upper arm. The explosive had penetrated to his fourth cervical vertebra, fractured it and knocked it out of alignment. And that had shocked his spinal cord.

At best, the doctors said, he would never walk again.

They sent him to the 70th General Hospital in Casablanca, then to Winter General Hospital in Topeka, Kan.

Finally, Doran and Bina Dole brought him home. When Bob Dole had left Russell the year before, brother Kenny recalls, he stood 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighed 190 pounds. Now he weighed 120 pounds, and he came home on a stretcher.

Every morning, his father had to dress him, he couldn't do it himself. And he had to be fed. Somebody had to turn him in bed.

Within weeks, he was back at Winter General in Topeka. His loss of bladder function had caused kidney stones and a severe infection. His temperature spiked to 108.7 degrees. Doctors told Bina Dole that her son might die. They removed his right kidney.

He struggled again—and lived.

More than that, "By September, 1945," Koch quotes a medical report, "the patient had regained function of his bladder and bowels as well as function in both lower extremities with some improvement in the upper left extremity." He could stand. And he could move his left hand. Bina Dole took an apartment in Topeka, near the hospital. "Bob had learned to walk as a baby when he was between 10 and 11 months old," Koch quotes her as saying, with a note of undisguised pride. "At Winter General, I watched a nurse get him up out of bed. He walked the same way—tentatively, but with . . . determination. . . ."

Yet, there were things he could not do. When he used the bathroom, someone had to help him with his clothes. He had started smoking, but his mother had to hold his cigarettes to his lips. "You get frustrated," Bob Dole says, slipping into the second person, as he sometimes does to save off the memory. "You get mad sometimes."

When he envisioned his future, he thought about an Army pension and selling pencils on a street corner. He did not like the way he looked in a mirror. He avoided meeting people when he had his shirt off. He'd never get married. "For a while," he says, "I wondered why it happened to me."

But he struggled on. For physical therapy, he was transferred to Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Mich. There, two further setbacks almost killed him. In the final instance, he was spared only because Doran and Bina Dole approved the use of an experimental drug—streptomycin.

However, the meager physical skills he had developed were gone. So, once again, he started over. Standing. Walking. Oldsmobile had built a car equipped with special controls. Bob Dole tried to tell it in the hospital. He hustled deals, Koch recalls, with the men who couldn't move their feet.

From an uncle, he had heard of a doctor in Chicago named Hampar Kelikian, who might help Dole's right shoulder and his right arm. Kelikian was an Armenian. He agreed to operate—and without charge, because "Dole epitomized America to me."

"He had the faith to endure."

Still, there were hospital costs. So instead of going to Chicago, Bob Dole came home again to Russell. "But this time," Koch says, "he came standing up."

He was "skinny as hell," Dean Banker recalls. But by now, and by dint of hard work, he could jog. On the day he got home, he put on his old track shoes and ran awkwardly around the block. He tried to run faster. When he fell, he got up by himself.

When people in Russell found out he needed to go to Chicago for surgery, they began a fund drive.

There was one cigar box at the VFW hall, another at Dawson's. Others were scattered through town. People put in dollars, nickels, dimes. "We low-keyed it," Dean Banker says. "We didn't try to make it a hero type of thing. That would have embarrassed him tremendously."

And his folks were very sensitive to outside help. "During 1947, Kelikian operated on Bob Dole several times. Eventually, he would regain some of the use of his left arm and hand. But his right arm remained badly damaged, and his right hand would never regain strength or much feeling."

He would spend a total of 39 months—more than three years altogether—in hospitals. Kenny Dole says his brother told him: "I'm going to get those years back."

Whether he did, it seemed, would be up to one person: himself.

He re-enrolled in college, this time at the University of Arizona. Initially, his first wife, Phyllis Holden, an occupational therapist whom he had met at the Army hospital in Michigan, went to class with him to take notes. But that was not the answer. He found a way to do it himself. He came up with "an old-time tape recorder with the big reels," Townsley recalls. "And he would run that thing and lug it back and forth." At first, Phyllis signed all of his checks for him. But he learned to write with his left hand.

She helped him whenever she could, Noel Koch says, "but he wouldn't let her do much."

His left hand was awkward, but he could use it to dress.

"It takes a long time," says Bill Taggart, a former Senate aide. "But he does it himself, and he really works at it." Zipping his pants, tying his shoes and buttoning his shirts were very difficult. But he did it, sometimes with a buttonhook.

If his private life was marked by self-reliance, so was his public life.

Doing things himself made Bob Dole a very diligent legislator, a hard-working county attorney and a very personally involved congressman and senator. "He's very much engaged," says Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-Wyo.), Dole's whip when he became majority leader.

But that can be the problem.

Bob Dole can be too intolerant of assistance.

When he first moved to Washington, he bought a house in suburban Arlington, Va. Phyllis and their daughter, Robin, stayed back in Kansas much of the



Bob Dole weeps as he speaks to a Robert Dole Day crowd in his hometown of Russell, Kan.,



during the 1976 campaign. President Ford is in the background. At right, Dole votes in '76.

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