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BATTLE OF THE REPUBLICANS

great heights. You've established that you're a strong, effective political leader. What you have to do now is draw some sharp distinctions on important issues between yourself and Bush. When you do that, you'll be drawing sharp contrasts between yourself and the Reagan administration, and Reagan remains very popular. It's risky," he said, but the larger danger was that Bush would win by simple inertia. "You have to take risks," he told Dole, "if you're going to get this nomination."

Dole agreed, or seemed to, he had in fact already begun the process, he said, differing with Bush on the deficit and criticizing the Iran-contra affair without directly implicating the president. It could be done, he said. It had to be done.

The treatment seem to take. Dole's reserve started to chip, and with the onset of winter, it broke. He tweaked Bush almost daily for everything from his head start at birth to his sideline seat in the administration. The rat-a-tat occasionally took on the hard edge of class war—a conflict setting Main Street against Wall Street, Russell High against Andover, a life of struggle against a life of noblesse oblige. Bush had never really been Big Rich, and Dole had come a long and comfortable distance from poverty, but with little in the way of policy to argue about, they backed over their respective net worths and competed for the honor of disclosing the most tax returns (Dole won, 21 years' worth to Bush's 14). The skirmishing suited the purposes of Bush Inc., casting Bush as Luke Skywalker against Dole's Darth Vader. The marketing division at Dole headquarters was a great deal less pleased; anything that awakened memories of the senator in his old chain-saw massacre mode was as welcome there as a root-canal repair.

They called it the Great Dole Bumper Sticker Commission, and for its short, unhappy life in 1987, it revealed the chaos in the house the senator built—a disorder radiating outward from him to the farthest reaches of his campaign. Dole's managers of the moment had decided that what he really needed was bumper stickers, something in smarter hues than red, white and blue. Media consultants Alex Castellanos and Mike Murphy spent the next two months churning out mock-ups—enough, Castellanos guessed afterward, to plaster every Republican bumper in America with its own one-of-a-kind variation on the basic theme. Each new design and color scheme was handed up the line to the senator, and each came bouncing back down to its creators with vaguely framed directions to try again.

The reasons for Dole's unhappiness were never made plain, until Castellanos, hip-deep in dummy stickers, began asking questions. Dole, he discovered, had received each new mock-up with grunts, shrugs and noncommittal comments. His people simply assumed, from long and fearful exposure to his humors, that he was displeased and wanted something better. In fact, he didn't much care then or later, when, after months of scholastic debate, his people finally settled on yellow and blue. The senator, had anyone had the nerve to ask, was partially colorblind.

That the question reached his desk at all was a measure both of his own compulsion to meddle in the minutiae of his campaign and of the sometimes paralytic terror he inspired among his troops. As pollster Richard Wirthlin put it, he was forever getting into the thick of thin things. There was, for one flagrant example, the time he discovered that a staff man had bought a \$2,000 billboard in Houston; the amount was petty cash in a badly over-spent campaign, but the senator was angry, and the billboard became an issue at the highest levels of his management. He constantly second-guessed his handlers, sometimes brutally and in public, and when his disappointment in them became terminal, he didn't fire them—he dealt directly with their

subordinates or brought in new layers of management over their heads. Lines of authority blurred, since no one finally had any except Dole. Factions formed, each with access to the senator, none with his full confidence. Third-rank staffers did campaign business without notice to their bosses. "Senator Dole told me to go to South Dakota," they would explain when asked, or, "Senator Dole told me to send those mailings to Kings County."

In November 1987, Brock, the sometime senator from Tennessee, was brought in as campaign chairman to try to bring order to the chaos. The tonic effect of his arrival was short-lived, both for his client and for the organization he had inherited; he appeared to the holdovers to be breaking eggs without knowing how to make an omelet. His early hires came in well above market prices, at an average annualized rate of \$60,000. They were known as the High Rollers for the roundness of the numbers on their paychecks and the loftiness of the offices in which Brock installed them, two floors above the old campaign executive suite on I. Street.

The ballooning payroll at headquarters ate up the campaign's cash reserves for mail and media, and the advent of the High Rollers drained its already low store of morale. Their favored treatment was taken by the old crowd to mean that their skills and their experience of Dole's moods and quirks were no longer relevant.

Their suspicions seemed to them confirmed with the arrival of Norman (Skip) Watts as political director at \$10,500 a month, plus a rent-free condo in the Virginia suburbs and air fare home to his family in Woodstock, Vt., every weekend. His qualifications were not plain even to the candidate he was to serve; he had been out of big-time national politics since 1976, and some field work he had undertaken for the Dole campaign in New England had not gone well. Watts displayed his disdain for the old guard like a battle flag; it was his belief, thinly veiled, that Brock should have begun by firing them all.

The honeymoon between candidate and chairman ended almost before it began. Dole was too driven and Brock too genteel to make the match work; the Old Couple metamorphosed into the Bickersons practically overnight. There was friction early on when Brock refused to mix it up with Lee Atwater on TV, viewing it as beneath his station; there was, he said huffily, no sense getting into a pissing contest with a skunk. "If Brock won't do it, I will," Dole grumbled. His image doctors winced. They had hoped that Brock would do the hatchet work for him, but Brock seemed not to want to get his hair mussed; his enemies on I. Street guessed that he was trying to save a place at Bush's table, just in case.

So they lumbered on toward Iowa as they were, a top-heavy dinosaur of a campaign, with their whole stack riding on the results of the caucuses there. They had to win New Hampshire, too, Wirthlin argued in his strategy book, and ride the wave south on Super Tuesday; if they lost badly there, it would be over. It all sounded double on paper, in Wirthlin's determinedly hopeful prose, but it wasn't; they didn't have the resources, on the ground or in the bank, and it was too late to put them in place.

Skip Watts knew it. From his office at headquarters he had looked down the same road past Iowa through the prism of his estrangement and had seen only impending doom. New Hampshire was impossible, the South was about as seaworthy a vessel for Dole's hopes as the Titanic, and what passed for morale was shot; it had gone the way of the misspent money and the phantom field staff.

The first votes had yet to be cast when, late in January, Watts had a chat with his wife, Jill, in his office. "Easter in Vermont," he promised her. Bob Dole might think he was going to be president, but he was finished, and Watts was sorry he had ever left home.

Even decisions on the color scheme of his bumper stickers were passed up to the candidate himself

Russ - from Round George (Welling)

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Sen. Dole Keynote NATaT Conference Speaker

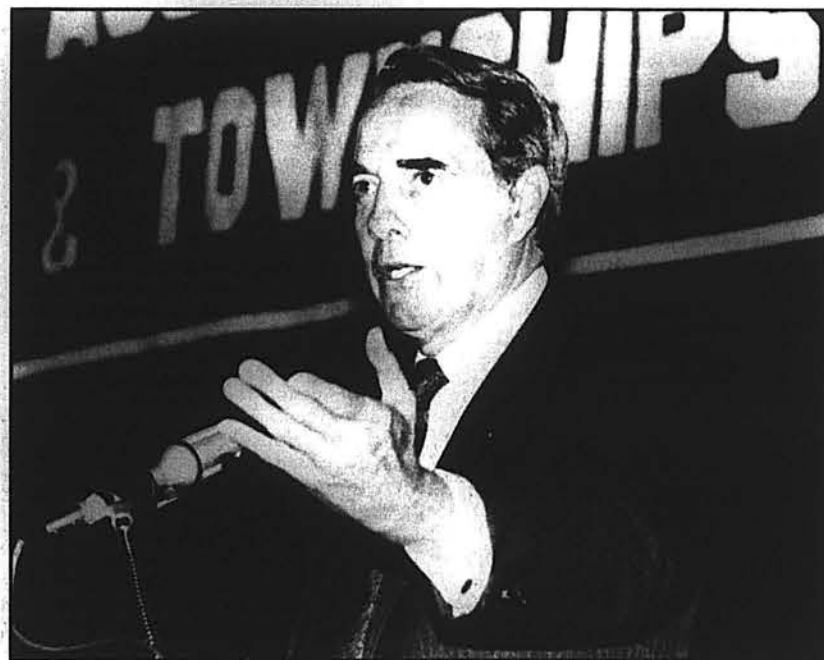
WASHINGTON—Speaking at the annual educational conference of the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) last September, Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) reminded NATaT attendees, "I come from a small town." He told them of his efforts to help rural areas. Kansans all know Dole is from Russell, Kansas.

The only announced presidential candidate from a small town, Sen. Dole was applauded several times during his speech. "I know you're concerned about the loss of revenue sharing," he said. Dole said he has introduced the Rural Recovery and Revitalization Act to assist small communities. The bill was drafted "to target or set aside a fair share of federal procurement, defense, re-

search and construction projects" for rural areas. In addition, the bill mandates "assistance in indentifying federal funds and grants which could be awarded to small communities," Dole said.

Sen. Dole has also drafted a legislative plan, Rural Fund for Development, which would make \$1 billion available for lending to private sector investment in rural America. Of importance to NATaT members, he also proposed that the federal government combine "all rural development programs into a single authority to provide one-stop shopping."

Responding to the request of NATaT Executive Director Nancy Brown, this is the third time Senator Dole has been the key speaker for NATaT's annual convention.



U.S. Senator Bob Dole addressing the September 1987 NATaT Conference.