

CAMPAIGN '96 BRIEFING

Lots More Mr. Nice Guy

■ BOB DOLE

AGE ON INAUGURATION DAY 1997 73
HOMETOWN Russell, Kansas
EDUCATION Washburn Municipal University, Kansas, bachelor's and law degrees
MILITARY SERVICE U.S. Army, 1943-48
CURRENT JOB Senate majority leader
PREVIOUS JOBS Has served as a member of Congress since 1961
FAMILY Married to Elizabeth Dole; one daughter from first marriage
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY Conservative with occasional centrist leanings
MAJOR FEATS Champion of the food-stamp program; led charge to authorize use of force in the Gulf War
PET ISSUE Downsizing Federal Government in favor of states and localities
BIGGEST PLUS Experience, stature
BIGGEST MINUS A reputation for crankiness
ODDS OF WINNING ELECTION 3 to 1

By KAREN TUMULTY WASHINGTON

SO THIS IS HOW IT FEELS TO BE the front runner. This is what it was like for Ronald Reagan in 1980, when Bob Dole was so far back in the pack that he barely rated mention. This is what it was like for George Bush in 1988, when Dole's disaster-prone campaign amounted to little more than a speed bump on Bush's path to the White House.

It has taken Dole two decades of trying to get to this position. Long before the fanfare of the first primary, Dole is already drawing sizable crowds in New Hampshire, the burial ground of his presidential hopes in the past. His campaign's list of eager volunteers there has topped 22,000—more than triple the number he was able to recruit during the entire New Hampshire campaign in 1988. With every poll showing him swamping the lesser known in the New Hampshire race, Dole alone among the likely G.O.P. contenders had the luxury of being able to skip the first debate.

Seven years ago, almost no one—including Dole himself—thought that he would ever have another shot at the White House. He had failed twice. The 1988 election sent him into the darkest period of his political career. Then came a bout with prostate cancer—an old man's disease and a reminder that not even the superman who took Nazi fire would live forever. Meanwhile, there was the incessant yapping that he had to endure from combative young pups in his own party, who saw Dole as an artifact of that embarrassing era when Republicans had been willing to compromise principle in order to govern.

Dole faces an intoxicating possibility that he wouldn't have dared dream in those black days: his time may finally have come. "It just seems to me—and this may be all in the ash can—but it seems to me that it's easier this time. It just seems different," he told TIME. "It may not turn out that way, but it seems like it's sort of falling in place."

The landscape around him has been transformed. George Bush never got to serve a second term; the Democrat who succeeded him became impossibly vulnerable. Then lightning struck in the form of the momentous 1994 election that returned Dole to his old job as majority leader, with his own party running Congress for the first time in 40 years.

Is Dole's age a liability? At 71, he looks at least 10 years younger and follows a schedule that would exhaust someone half his age. In a national TIME/CNN poll last week of 426 registered Republicans, 82% of those surveyed said they don't think Dole is too old to run for President next year. And if Dole remains in good health, his age might work in his favor as an antidote to the occasional adolescent quality of Clinton. In Dole, says his friend Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming, "the American people will see what they are thirsting for. It's called leadership."

Dole insists he has undergone a personal transformation as well, a softening of his notorious prickliness. Still uncomfortable discussing his feelings, he struggles to ex-

plain: "I'm more, I don't know what the word is, relaxed, or serene, at peace, or whatever the word is. I don't go to bed every night and think, 'I've got to get this done. I've got to be successful.'" He talks more openly about the pain and the disability that linger from his war injury, how he cannot look at himself in the mirror in the morning until after he has put on his T shirt, how he must reach for a hook to button his shirt.

"Maybe he's mellowed or let his guard down a little more," says his wife Elizabeth, who is expected to quit her post soon as Red Cross president to join the campaign in a yet to be determined role. "He's tender and loving. That's the man I fell in love with, but I think, somehow, he's willing to let more of that show through now."

On the stump, Dole seems more relaxed than before, more focused with his message of smaller government. The quintessential Washington insider is running

on a promise of returning power to the people, through their state and local governments. In the breast pocket of his perpetually crisp white shirts, he keeps an index card on which is printed the 10th Amendment, which reserves for the states all powers not expressly granted the Federal Government. But what really distinguishes him from the rest of the field, Dole told an audience in Nashua, is that "I've been tested in many ways, and I do believe I've been able to provide leadership."

But leadership can be a difficult commodity to sell, particularly if it is a substitute for vision or a euphemism for the consummate pragmatism that has alienated many of the conservative faithful. "Senator Straddle," Bush called him. Still, Dole can show breathtaking resolve when he believes he is right. Of all the battles that he has fought in the Senate, the one that he is proudest of is one he ultimately lost. In

1985 he pulled together a one-vote majority in the Senate to pass a tough budget that included a freeze on Social Security cost of living increases. Had that plan gone through, today's deficit would be significantly smaller. But in the end, Ronald Reagan lacked the nerve to touch the most sacred entitlement. Partly as a result of the budget vote, the G.O.P. lost its Senate majority in the 1986 election.

Dole's major concern is being outflanked. To succeed as majority leader, he will have to forge compromises, but in his rhetoric on issues like affirmative action, Dole maintains a sharp conservative edge. "What he's quite obviously trying to do is stop Phil Gramm from carving out huge differences from Dole on the right," says David Mason, of the Heritage Foundation. And while Gramm can operate on the Senate sidelines, Dole must continually prove himself as a leader. On that score, he suf-

INTO BATTLE

A replenished Dole took on New Hampshire once again

fered a major defeat last week, when he failed to come up with the last vote needed to pass the balanced-budget amendment.

Many Republicans are skeptical that Dole can pull it all off. "It's his nomination to lose—and he probably will," said Stuart Rothenberg, an independent political analyst. Perhaps the biggest question is how well Dole will be able to maintain that new inner peace. Just weeks after pledging in the 1988 campaign to become "a new Bob Dole," the candidate could not restrain himself from telling a New Hampshire heckler to "go back into your cave." So it is understandable that some are not convinced by Dole's latest declarations that he is ready to be "warm, cuddly, fuzzy." Said Gregory Carson, a New Hampshire state legislator: "In 1988 he got very unelectable very quickly. Otherwise, I'd hop right on the Dole bandwagon." Then again, it may not matter. After all, Dole is running in a political environment in which it is only slightly shocking for a Congressman on the House floor to call the President a traitor.

Dole talks like someone who is a long way from retirement. "You've got to like this business, and I like politics," he told TIME. "Dan Quayle had me right when he said, 'When Bob Dole has a day off, he goes to a fund raiser.'" The Doles have never been much for the capital's social scene. They still live in the two-bedroom Watergate apartment that was Dole's bachelor pad after his divorce from his first wife Phyllis. Most evenings, they have their dinner on TV trays as they watch rented videos or an old-movie channel.

Markedly out of step with Newt Gingrich's headlong march to the future, Dole's campaign evokes a more heroic era. Dole first started giving new thought to running during last summer's D-day anniversary celebrations, where other veterans greeted him as a hero, bringing their children and grandchildren to meet him. Until then, he had agreed with the idea that Bill Clinton's election marked a new generation. Now, he believes he has been given another chance: "Maybe there is one more mission. Maybe there is one more call to serve."

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TIME, MARCH 13, 1995

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Dole plucks Pataki, piles up supporters

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tive leader they love as their president."

This is the staple criticism of Dole: that his formidable legislative skills are not matched with vision; that when Dole talks about an issue he talks about strategy and vote counts, not why a policy should be approved or defeated.

For all the work on organization, it is this deficiency, whether real or perceived, that even Dole's closest advisers concede must be eliminated.

"The first way we handle that is going to be by our announcement," said Scott Reed, Dole's campaign manager. "He will lay out the reasons why he is running, both thematically and substantively."

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As part of this effort, Dole last week proposed eliminating four Cabinet departments: Energy, Education, Commerce and Housing and Urban Development.

A few months ago, Dole said he might declare he would serve only one term if elected. He said his thinking was that a one-term president could make tough choices without worrying about re-election, but the idea was quickly interpreted as a potential compromise to ease concerns about his age.

Dole, 71, has since nixed the one-term idea.

Still, just discussing such a concession has encouraged talk, even among Dole admirers, that he is a fragile front-runner, propped up for now by his high name recognition and high profile as Senate majority leader but destined to stumble, again, when voters start picking a potential president.

In shrugging off such doubts, Dole says he will offer a coherent message of reining in the power of government at home while responsibly exercising U.S. leadership abroad. It is clear Dole is also counting on Republican voters to look at the field and decide he has earned the nomination, even if they disagree with him on this or that.

"I've been tested," he said. "I've provided leadership. I'm not a lone ranger. I know how to bring people together. I have been there in every battle for this party for a long time."

THE TOPEKA CAPITAL JOURNAL Tuesday, March 14, 1995

Dole wins Pataki nod, piles up supporters

By JOHN KING
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sunday night it was Ross Perot's radio show, Monday morning a flight to New York to accept the endorsement of Gov. George Pataki. It's not easy being the Republican presidential front-runner.

But Bob Dole is getting used to it. After initially shying away from the front-runner label, Dole now uses it himself on campaign statements and advisories. The way he sees it, he's stuck with the designation, so he might as well try to turn it to his advantage.

"We'll see what it looks like a year from now" when the first votes are cast, Dole said recently. "But it's a lot easier to sign people up this time. You get off the plane or walk into the room and it feels a lot better."

The comparison, of course, is to last time — 1988. Then, Dole won the Iowa caucuses. But he was crushed by George Bush in New Hampshire.

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then again in South Carolina, and Bush cruised through the Super Tuesday primaries, on to the nomination and ultimately the White House.

So now, as Dole prepares for the 1996 campaign, one of his first priorities is to exorcise the ghosts of 1988.

Or to hire them. As Dole vows not to relive the organizational deficiencies of his 1988 campaign, he is enlisting the aid of several 1988 Bush loyalists. And he is carefully compiling lists of supporters. In New Hampshire, the Dole campaign says it has identified more than 25,000 supporters already; at the close of his 1988 effort in the state, Dole had 6,800 names on file.

"He has learned a lot from 1988 and is trying to avoid the same kind of tactical pitfalls," said

David Carney, a former Bush political aide now helping Dole. "We will be much more organized and have a much deeper and broader organization than anyone in the country."

Rolling out endorsements from state GOP leaders, such as New York's Pataki, is part of Dole's effort to prove he will not be outthrust this time. Courting Perot voters is another.

"But it won't be enough," contends Mike Murphy, who was Dole's media adviser in 1988 but is siding with former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander in the 1996 race.

"There is a great respect in the party for his loyalty and mastery of the legislative process," said Murphy. "But turning that into a compelling message for the presidency is a very difficult job. It is far from certain that Republicans want the legisla-

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— Sen. Bob Dole

Hutchinson News Tuesday, March 14, 1995

Pataki: Dole 'best hope'

Newsday

NEW YORK — New York Gov. George Pataki endorsed Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole for president on Monday, giving the Republican front-runner a big boost in his bid to lock up New York's key primary.

Less than a year before the state's Republicans go to the polls in the first of the big-state primaries, the senior senator from Kansas already has garnered the backing of most of New York's top GOP officials.

"He is America's best hope and New York's best hope," Pataki said at a joint news conference with Dole in Manhattan.

With New York's primary moved up to March 7, Dole acknowledged that Pataki's nod would "have a great impact" on his presidential run.

"This is going to be a shot heard, if not around the world, then around the country," Dole said.

Salina, Kansas

Tuesday, March 14, 1995

50 cents

Dole makes use of front-runner label

Senator leaves behind ghosts of '88 campaign

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The Associated Press

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File photo
 Sen. Bob Dole is hoping to avoid the mistakes that plagued him in 1988.