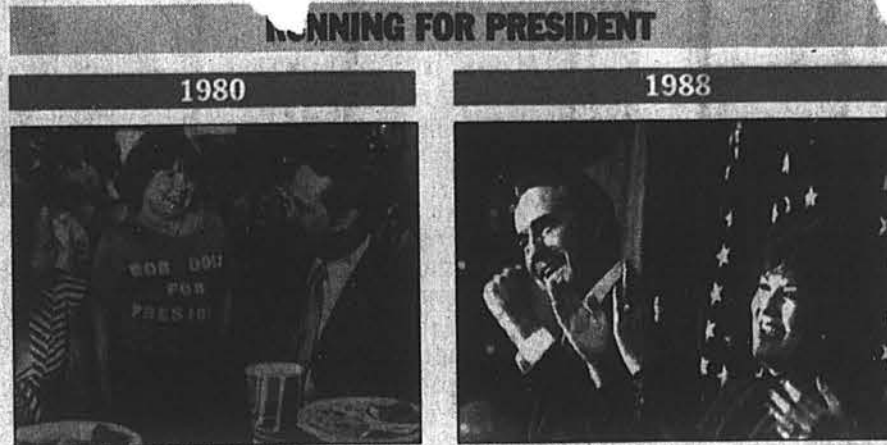


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## Third time around

Buried by Ronald Reagan in '80, out-flanked by George Bush in '88, Bob Dole is back. And this time the senator from Kansas, the last of his generation with that "burning in the belly" for the White House, is at the front of the pack.



FRED BLOCHER/The Star

Backed by Republican members of the House and Senate, Dole spoke March 29 in Washington, D.C., at a Republican National Committee reception celebrating the passage of the unfunded-mandates bill.

## Dole undaunted as he looks to lead

By JAKE THOMPSON  
Washington Correspondent

### FIRST OF A SERIES

WASHINGTON — One more mission. To say that the phrase resonated, according to Mari Maseng Will, doesn't do it justice. It raised the hairs on her neck.

She had huddled with Sen. Bob Dole in early February to coax out a message, a focus for the coming campaign. First, he recounted his visit last year to European battlefields, including the Italian hillside where his life changed forever.

Then the discussion slipped over into his worry about perceptions of America's decline as a world leader.

"Maybe," Dole mused, "there's one more mission, one more call to serve for

our generation."

Will knows about campaign sound bites, bumper-sticker philosophy. And she had never heard this.

"It wasn't something suggested to him by some communications guru," said Will, herself a communication guru in Dole's 1988 campaign and now a consultant.

Wherever the phrase came from, it fits. The old World War II soldier, the last of his mighty generation still standing on the field of political battle. The mental toughness forged on the American prairie during the Depression and then in the

wards of veterans hospitals. The wounded leader who never learned to lose gracefully or ever seemed to tire.

One more mission.

Monday, with his formal declaration of candidacy at the state Capitol in Topeka, Dole takes that message to the voters, trying to persuade them he is the man to lead America into the 21st century.

But why, after 34 years of congressional combat, after three losing national political quests, after flying more air miles campaigning for himself and other Republicans than any politician of this century, why does this 71-year-old Republican still have this burning for the White

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