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Third time around

Disability only fuels Dole's drive

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Mondale then, ignored him four years later while Reagan got the nod and snubbed his 1988 effort against a better-organized George Bush.

Dole plowed on, willing himself up the political ladder, from loser to Republican Party elder statesman in the 1990s.

As Kim Wells, a Kansas City lawyer and Dole adviser, said: "Dole never throws in the towel." But he came quite close after 1988.

"I remember saying, 'I think my time has passed,'" Dole admitted. "I didn't see any way to do it. Age was a factor, at least in my mind. Bush was there for two terms. There'd be a lot of new faces around."

In late 1991, surgeons removed his cancerous prostate; he toyed with retiring, decided against it.

"The longer you're in politics, the harder it is to walk away from big issues," Fitzwater said. "When people leave government, invariably they talk about missing the big decisions, the power."

And suddenly, Bush, the Persian Gulf war leader, was in trouble.

"Jimminy, if he loses, I'm going to be the Republican leader . . . That started me thinking again," he thought in October 1992.

Within weeks of Bush's defeat, the new Democratic president was making the wrong kind of headlines: an attorney general nominee with nanny problems, the push for gays in the military, on and on.

By March 1993, his loyalists were pushing him to send the necessary signals to potential field staff, financiers and rivals about

his intentions for 1996.

But it was hard to get a fix on where he was.

Dole's high-profile role as Senate minority leader, fighting Clinton's economic-stimulus plan, his budget, his health-care reform, the crime bill, dredged up the "Dr. Gridlock" sobriquet.

"I was the point guy, the bad guy, my numbers were going up and down like this," Dole said waving his left arm up and down.

Then the November 1994 election shook up the American political galaxy. After the stars settled, they appeared to line up for Dole.

Still he seemed to hesitate, telling Gloria Nelson, his sister in Russell, that his wife, Elizabeth,

worried about another possible national defeat.

"I do want to run," Nelson recalled him saying, "but I think she's just trying to protect me."

On Dec. 21, Dole made it unofficially official, telling a Boston newspaper an exploratory presidential committee would be set up in early January.

The Dole crowd was relieved, but not surprised.

"There's no deep Freudian megalomania," said Washington lobbyist Tom Korologos about his longtime friend. "Here's a leader who wants to lead."

Judy Harbaugh, a top aide in the '60s and '70s, remembers her boss scanning letters or speeches and handing them back. "There

are too many 'I's' in here, go fix it," he would say. And they would rewrite, saying "In my view . . ." or "It just seems to me . . ."

But listening to Dole these days, the confidence, the acceptance of who he is, is stronger. It's still that Midwestern understatement, but it's not being edited out. Just count the "I's".

"I still think I can be a force to make a difference," Dole said. "I get accused of being a legislator. I don't think there's anything wrong with being a legislator because I'm finding out on an almost daily basis around here, you've got to get things done."

"So I add up my assets and liabilities, I think I come out all right."

Salina, Kansas

Sunday, April 9, 1995

•Will entire nation one day be

Bob Dole Country?

Story by LINDA MOWERY-DENNING/Salina Journal

Marynell Reece has many memories of Bob Dole: that sunny day in January 1987, when he wept with grief at the funeral of his friend and political mentor Huck Boyd of Phillipsburg; another time in Indianapolis when presidential candidate Dole forfeited his five minutes of speaking time to talk with a young man in a wheelchair.

"Bob is a very compassionate man," said Reece, a former Republican National Committeewoman from Scandia.

Other friends — and Dole has many of them in Kansas — echo her sentiments.

"He is just a real good guy," said Jim Roderick, a Salina physician who has known Dole since their days together at the University of Kansas in the early 1940s.

"He's going to be our next president — no question about it," said Keith Duckers, retired president of St. John's Military School and a Dole friend since the mid-1950s.

On Monday — more than 160 miles away from his hometown of Russell and light years away from the days he

pumped sodas at Dawson's Drugstore — Dole will be in Topeka to make his presidential bid official.

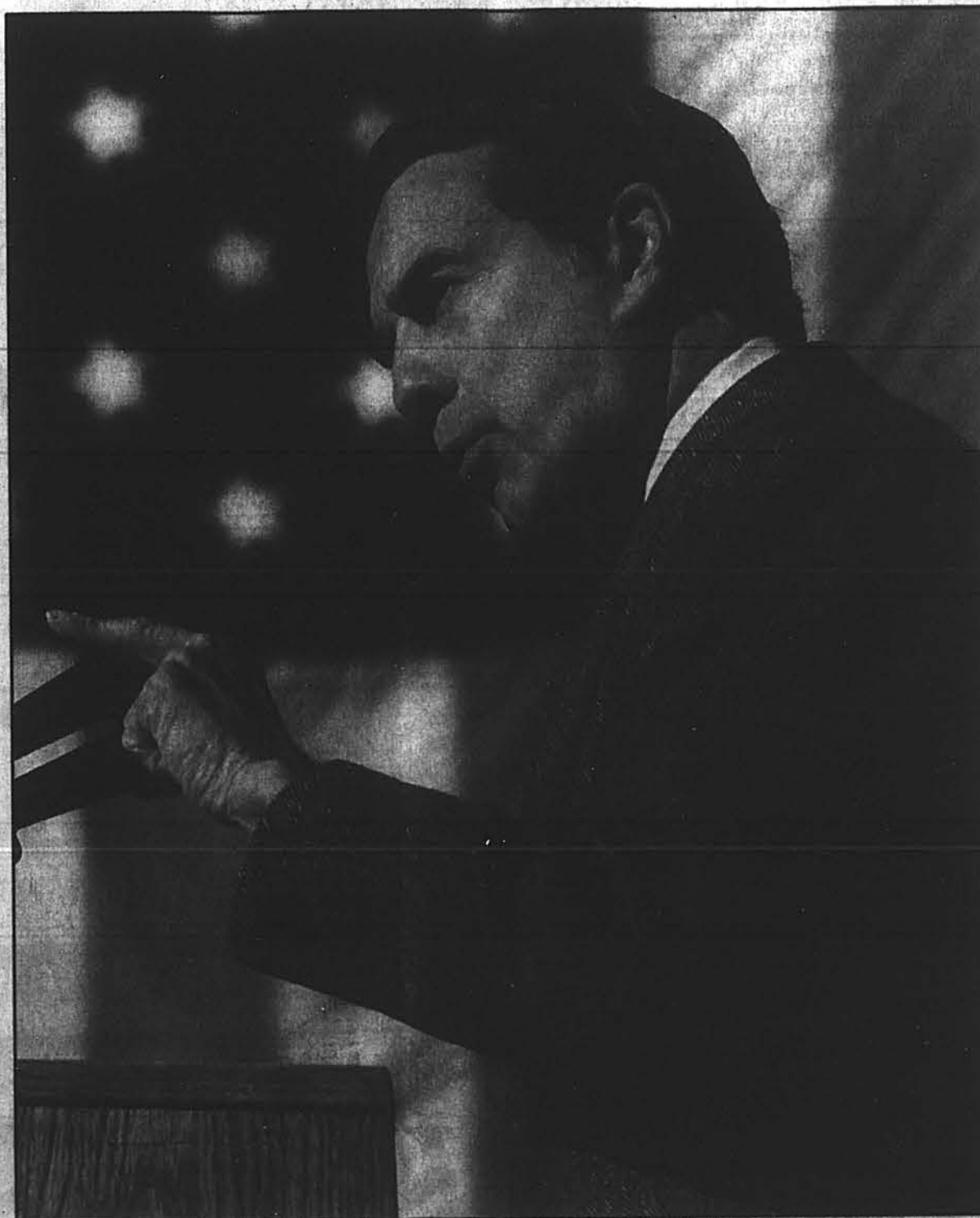
He will stand on the steps of the state Capitol, where 59 years ago another Kansan, Alf Landon, announced he would challenge President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the nation's highest office.

Dole's appearance will be early — at 9:30 a.m. — so he can campaign later in the day in New Hampshire, the state that in 1988 destroyed his hopes for the presidency by giving George Bush the biggest share of its primary votes.

Dole obviously hopes to do better this time. If he doesn't, however, his quest for the presidency should still rank in the history books.

This has to be the 71-year-old Dole's last campaign for the White House. It also will be a last-chance campaign for a generation that struggled through the Depression, fought in World War II and eventually came to enjoy the most prosperous years in the nation's history.

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Portrait provided by Sen. Bob Dole's office