

Bob Dole's run for the presidency

Presidency is Dole's to lose

By Peter A. Brown
Scripps Howard News Service
TOPEKA - Bob Dole's first presidential campaign was a joke. In his second bid, he blew a golden opportunity. As he formally begins his candidacy for a third time Monday, the White House is his to lose.

major Republican who has gone public has endorsed Dole. Many see a new Dole. "I have never seen him as relaxed with himself, and I have known him for 20 years," says Warren Rudman, former senator from New Hampshire. Those with the new view say Dole is not the sharp-tongued political gut fighter who blamed past wars on Democrats, but a man surprised he still has a chance to be president. "He seems to have the ability to perhaps laugh at himself a little more than he used to," says Frank Fahrenkopf, Republican national chairman.

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- Frank Fahrenkopf, former GOP national chairman

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Senator will declare run for presidency from spot where his career began

By Lew Ferguson
Associated Press Writer
TOPEKA - Bob Dole, the pragmatist who has survived war wounds, Watergate and his own sometimes acerbic wit to stand one step from the pinnacle of American politics, returns Monday to the Capitol where his career began. He will declare his candidacy for the presidency for the third time, but this is the first time he will do it from the steps of the Kansas Statehouse. And, for the first time, he does it as the early front-runner for the Republican Party's nomination.

ly constructed platform a quarter of the way up the 35 steps leading from street level to the second floor of the Capitol, he will survey a throng of supporters and fellow Kansans not unlike the one Alf M. Landon saw on a hot July evening 59 years ago. Landon wasn't declaring his candidacy for the presidency that night in 1936. He was accepting the GOP nomination, which he had won in June without attending the party's national convention in Cleveland. Candidates did not go to con-

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Workers place banners on the south side of the Kansas Statehouse in preparation for Sen. Bob Dole's Monday morning announcement of his candidacy for the presidency.

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when Dole won Iowa's 1988 kickoff caucuses and had a lead in New Hampshire's crucial primary only to lose it and the nomination to George Bush. "The hard, angry edge that I think a lot of people saw seems to be gone. I see a much different Bob Dole. He is a much more polished, more thoughtful," Fahrenkopf said. "I always thought one of Ronald Reagan's strengths was that he was comfortable with himself. I never thought Dole was comfortable with himself the last time. There is marked difference now. He is at a point of his life where he is comfortable with himself and knows what he believes."

Bill Lacy, a top aide in the '88 campaign and chief strategist in this one, says Dole "is a man who thought his last chance for the presidency was gone and then he realized he had one more shot." The other GOP candidates are Sens. Phil Gramm of Texas, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Richard Lugar of Indiana; California Gov. Pete Wilson, former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, Rep. Bob Dornan of California and TV broadcaster Pat Buchanan. Those not riding the new Dole Express see the same flaws as when he was the vice presidential nominee in 1976, the last-place candidate in the 1980 primaries (he got just 597 votes in New Hampshire), and the runner-up in '88. They say he lacks a clear vision for the country. They know he understands Washington. He has been in Congress for 35 years. They aren't so sure he understands America. Some worry that he is too old, especially in contrast to President Clinton. Dole will be 73 next year, older than Reagan was when he took office. The public knows Dole has survived a brush with prostate cancer. "If you believe the 1992 and 1994 elections were about change and believe the forces that created those upheavals are still at work, it is hard to imagine Dole as the new force for change in 1996," says Stan Greenberg, Clinton's pollster. "Age is just one piece of it. He is a political war horse with a long record as part of the political establishment. I just don't think he can reinvent himself as the person who can bring about the kind of changes people want in the coun-

'I've been tested in many ways, and I do believe I've been able to provide leadership.'

- Sen. Bob Dole

try." There are Republicans who agree. Tom Rath, former attorney general in New Hampshire, ran Dole's campaign there last time. This time he is running Alexander's effort. "I think in order to take the White House from Bill Clinton, the Republican Party has two choices: The most senior, seasoned and sober Washington insider, or move generationally and outside of Washington. I believe the second is the more electorally viable way to go." Whether or not Dole wins the nomination, today he is Mr. Republican in America's eyes. He easily defeats President Clinton in trial heats among registered voters. In one late February poll, 62 percent of Republicans viewed him favorably, and only 10 percent unfavorably - a phenomenal ratio for a well-known politician. "The strongest candidate by far is Bob Dole," says Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating, a neutral Republican. "He is a high-comfort figure to a lot of folks." "We may well go back a generation for the first time in American history. People see Bill Clinton as an uncertain and rather indecisive figure and Dole is certain and decisive." GOP pollster Fred Steeper says Dole's support is broad, based on years of service and experience. "I don't think it is based in any particular issue constituency. That is both his strength and his weakness." On Dole's side is the fact that the GOP historically turns to the candidate logically next in line for the job. In 1968, it was Richard Nixon. In 1980, it was Ronald

Reagan. In 1988, it was George Bush, vice president at the time. Democrats are different. In 1976 and 1992, the last two times they won the White House, they picked little-known governors, Jimmy Carter and Clinton, as their candidates. "A lot of Republicans probably feel it is Bob Dole's turn," GOP pollster David Hill says. "He has waited a long time and it is his time." Dole is a breed apart from House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the new generation of GOP firebrands. Some of Gingrich's Contract With America proposals that quickly passed the House have not fared as well in the Senate. The popular Balanced Budget Amendment went down, and the Senate is likely to dilute House changes in welfare and social policy. Regardless of Dole's efforts, he is likely to face conservative flak for the results. Moreover, Dole has previously been critical of some efforts by conservatives to cut taxes. A key reason for his 1988 defeat in New Hampshire was his refusal to pledge not to raise taxes. The country seems confused as to where Dole fits on the ideological spectrum. A poll released last month found 45 percent of Republicans see him as a conservative and 38 percent think he is a moderate. That may be because Dole has never campaigned on a specific agenda. Attacks against him as "Senator Straddle" have been effective. Now, he says his strength is his ability to deal with tough problems. "I've been tested in many ways, and I do believe I've been able to provide leadership," Dole says. "You will find things in my voting record you won't agree with. Leadership is about getting people to follow. I have some experience with that."

Dole staff to hold open meetings

WASHINGTON - Kansas Sen. Bob Dole's mobile office will visit 18 communities in western Kansas from April 17 through April 20. Staff assistant Johnny Gaffney will be hold open meetings as part of a constituent service tour, focused on responding to the comments and inquiries of voters across Kansas. The public is welcome to voice any concerns on current issues. Information on pending legisla-



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tion will also be available. Any person or group needing assistance in dealing with federal government affairs, such as veterans issues or Social Security, is encouraged to speak with Sen. Dole's representative. The following are the dates, times and locations of the mobile office tour: On April 17 at 8 a.m., Post Rock Cafe, Highway 18, Lincoln; at 10 a.m., Crossroads Restaurant, Hwy. 140 and 56 Junction, Ellsworth; at 5:30 p.m., Western Cooperative Electric Co., Community Room, East 1-70 and Hwy. 283. On April 18 at 7:30 a.m., Gove Co. Government Building, Community Room, Gove; at 9:30 a.m., Mitten's Cafe Meeting Room, East Hwy. 40,

Oakley; at noon (MDT), 1 p.m. (CDT), Main Street Restaurant, Sharon Springs; at 2:30 p.m. (MDT), 3:30 p.m. (CDT), Greeley County Courthouse, Courthouse, Tribune; at 5:30 p.m., High Plains Restaurant, East Hwy. 96, Leoti. On April 19 at 7:30 a.m., Scott County V.I.P. Center, 301 Church, Scott City; at 9:30 a.m., Pizza Shack, 140 S. Lane, Dighton; at noon, Derrick Inn, East Hwy. 96, Ness City; at 2:30 p.m., Rush Co. Courthouse, 2nd floor courtroom, La Crosse; at 5:30 p.m., Chamber of Commerce Meeting Room, 123 North Main, Hoiington. On April 20 at 7:30 a.m., Barton Co. Courthouse Meeting Room No. 106, Great Bend; at 9:30 a.m., Waxy's Cafe Meeting Room, 18 North Main, Ellinwood; at noon, Hotel LY-Kan, Sunflower Room, 105 West 1st, Lyons.

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ventions in those days. By tradition, they were "notified" of their nomination later - a throwback to the days before rapid communication.

A plaque marks the spot on a landing halfway up the Capitol's south steps where Landon stood after a day of 110-degree heat to make his acceptance speech at 8:31 p.m. on July 23, 1936. He looked out upon a sea of people estimated by reporters at 100,000. Another plaque nearby marks the spot where Charles Curtis stood on Aug. 28, 1928, to accept the GOP vice presidential nomination as the running mate of Herbert Hoover. Dole, the Russell native who earned his law degree at Washburn University of Topeka and held his first elective office as the state representative from Russell County in 1951-53, won't draw nearly the crowd Landon did as he declares for 1996. But those attending his formal declaration of candidacy will include U.S. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, Landon's daughter who was a week shy of her fourth birthday in 1936 and was at home in the governor's mansion when her father gave his famous acceptance speech. Kassebaum will introduce Gov. Bill Graves, who will introduce Dole for his announcement speech. Dole is scheduled to speak about 9:30 a.m., after a breakfast sponsored by the state Republican Party at a downtown hotel. Dole's wife, Elizabeth Hanford Dole, president of the American Red Cross, is the main speaker for the breakfast, which is by ticket admission only. She is due to speak about 8 a.m. Nobody knows how many people will turn out for the Statehouse ceremony, but it's virtually certain to pale in comparison to the throng that listened to Landon. Dole operatives were hoping for a large crowd but were making no predictions.

The Dole for President organization publicized the announcement with a quarter-page advertisement in the Topeka Capital-Journal which said, "Be a part of history! Come see and hear Senator Bob Dole announce his candidacy for president of the United States. Everyone is welcome. Entertainment. Fireworks. Refreshments. Fun." Shuttle bus service will be provided from the parking lot of the Kansas Expocentre - a half-mile south of the Capitol. Registered Republicans got a mailing inviting them to the announcement, including tickets that allow them to stand in a VIP section near the Statehouse steps. Dole, who will be 72 on July 22, made a half-hearted stab at seeking the GOP nomination in 1980, belatedly sending his top operative at the time, Dave Owen, to New Hampshire and buying television time there. He made a more serious bid in 1988, making his formal declaration in his home town of Russell on a bitterly cold day in November 1987. He concludes his announcement tour back in Russell next Friday and Saturday. The five-term senator survived his closest political call in 1974 when former U.S. Rep. Bill Roy nearly defeated him in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, which unraveled while Dole was national Republican chairman. He also has overcome an image some had of him as "Sen. Mean" because of his caustic political rhetoric. Now, the boy from Russell who was an athlete at the University of Kansas before going off to World War II and suffering crippling wounds in Italy, is on the threshold of realizing his long-held dream of being president. He approaches next year's GOP caucuses and primary elections with a solid lead in the polls and a cadre of supporters already lined up behind him.

A fragile but determined Dole gears up to run

By John King
AP Political Writer
WASHINGTON - Bob Dole nods at the suggestion the 1996 Republican presidential nomination is his to lose. "Unless I blow it," he says calmly. Plenty of Republicans predict he will. He's too old, they say, too moderate, too willing to deal, too involved in too many tax increases. Too much a legislator and not enough a visionary. Too much a product of the World War II generation to please the younger, more confrontational Republican activists. "We'll see," the 71-year-old Senate majority leader says evenly. "But I don't think so." The test officially begins today, when Dole returns home to Kansas to launch his third quest for the presidency. This time, Dole begins as the GOP front-runner - way ahead in early polls and, unlike his prior campaigns, the beneficiary of a slew of early endorsements and strong organizing in crucial states. "I think I have a certain advantage this time in being better known, in being in the leader's position," Dole said in an interview last week. "I think most people think I'm fairly steady, stable, not going to go over the cliff, not going to be extreme." At Dole headquarters, two maps taped to campaign manager Scott Reed's office walls say a lot about the strategy: Win the kickoff contests in Iowa and New Hampshire. "If we do that, we'll be almost impossible to ston-

said Reed. Just in case, following George Bush's 1988 model, Dole is building strong organizations in South Carolina and New York as firewalls. Despite Dole's careful work, many in the GOP ranks remain convinced his candidacy is fragile. "Right now he is benefiting from a weak field with no other nationally known candidate," said Republican strategist John Sears. "His problem is the same as always: He's got to tell people what would be most important to him as president, but he is not capable of doing that." Dole appears to be warming to the challenge. He says the defining themes of his campaign will be the "Three Rs" - reining in the power of the federal government, re-establishing a commitment to the values of his small-town Kansas upbringing, and re-asserting American leadership abroad. Aides say Dole will use his weeklong, cross-country announcement tour to silence critics who say he has no message, no vision. But getting Dole to stick to the script remains a work in progress. He still drives aides into fits by lapsing into the language of the legislative deal-maker he is. When asked, for example, what value guides him when he has to make a tough decision, Dole didn't talk about smaller government, or stronger communities or lower taxes. Instead, he said, "You look at it from straight politics. You get a good deal, something you

can live with." That philosophy has been the compass of Dole's life, a reflection of his prairie pragmatism and his years as the Senate Republican leader. To Dole, it is his greatest strength. "I have a good conservative record," Dole said. "I have the experience. I am able to provide the leadership, take positions, I have been tested. As George Bush used to say, I'll be ready on Day One." Others, however, consider it his greatest weakness. "What does he stand for?" asked GOP pollster Frank Luntz. "He appears to be struggling for a message and along the way making a lot of concessions to deal with weaknesses," said Ed Goess, another Republican pollster. Goess cites Dole's early suggestion he might pledge to serve just one term, an idea Dole has since rejected. Others point to the reversal Dole made in promising the National Rifle Association that gun control measures enacted last year would be brought up for repeal votes this year. Or the decision by Dole, an early Republican supporter of affirmative action, to call for a review of such programs. Dole scoffs at such talk. The NRA, he said, helped countless Republican candidates last year. In return, "they are certainly entitled to a vote." As for affirmative action, Dole points out that he first raised the idea of a review last May -



Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., arrives in his home state Sunday in Topeka with his wife Elizabeth.

before the issue was a hot political topic. Such debates serve as a vivid reminder that Dole's 34-year career in Washington gives rivals much to criticize. As Senate majority leader, there are potential pitfalls everywhere and already Dole faces criticism he is moving too slowly to adopt the aggressive House Republican agenda. But by the end of the year, Dole

pledges the Senate will adopt tax cuts, reform welfare and begin work on his proposal to cut at least four Cabinet departments: Education, Energy, Commerce and Housing. "You're never going to agree with everyone, in your family, in your party or anywhere," he said. "But generally I think we are on the same page."