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ROGER W. WILLIAMS

Roger Williams Dole's First Client of Law

By IRENE H. JEPSEN and MATT SHEPKER

The first client Robert J. Dole gained after joining Eric E. "Doc" Smith in a law practice here in 1952, was Roger W. Williams, of R. C. Williams, Inc.

Actually, it was a continuing lawyer-client relationship as Dole had been the oil field trucking firm's company attorney beginning when he completed law school, and, after becoming the county attorney, continued for an additional eight years, combining his duties in both responsibilities.

When Williams became mayor in 1963, Dole had left Russell for Washington, D. C., as a congressman elected in 1960.

Williams continued as mayor of Russell until his retirement in 1985. The mutual respect between the two men was personified when Dole came to Russell to attend Williams' farewell reception in May of that year.

"As mayor, I would have to go to Washington from time to time on city business. Bob always was helpful in my getting to see the proper people. He assisted in any way he could," Williams said.

At that time R. C. Williams, Inc. was the largest oil field trucking firm in Kansas. It employed about 100 in four locations, Russell, Liberal, Oberlin and Pratt.

"As the attorney for our company," Williams said, "Bob Dole handled all the legal problems in his private practice office. Some situations were not always desirable, but Bob would handle difficulties with good manners and firmness. He always had good rapport."

When Roger Williams was interviewed about Senator Bob Dole in 1987 he said:



ROGER W. WILLIAMS and Bob Dole at the retirement reception in 1985 for Williams. Williams was mayor of Russell from 1963 until 1985. (Staff Photo)

"I admire Bob Dole for what he has accomplished; for what he stands for.

"He's always does a great job in anything that he tackles, in all of his offices. He knows the needs of the American people and does his best to meet these needs.

"He has people in mind all the time, what is for them, and what will help them."

Williams believes those remarks benefit Dole today, eight years later, but adds:

"Bob Dole is the best candidate running and would do a very good job as president.

"He is a real fine person. People can trust him.

"Bob will help the people." Perhaps the most monumental

role Dole had in Williams' life also involved his wife, Elizabeth Williams.

While Dole was county attorney, he helped Roger and Elizabeth to adopt a son. Pete was 4 years old at the time and in a foster home here. Peter now has a daughter, Maria, who is 15 and a sophomore at Russell High School, "active in music and debate." His wife is the former Barbara Gill of Milwaukee, Wis.

An added twist to the story — Peter Williams is now Russell County Attorney. He was elected in 1992, beginning his first term in January 1993 — 50 years later, almost to the day, that Bob Dole, the lawyer, began his first term as Russell County Attorney.

Jones Believes Dole To Be Next President

By ALBERT LIN

Doris Kilian Jones of Russell said that when she attended Russell Junior High School with Bob Dole, she considered him a shy man.

However, she recognizes that Dole matured into a capable leader.



DORIS KILIAN JONES

Although Jones was a classmate of Dole's from kindergarten through high school, she said she knew him best while they were in seventh and eighth grades at Russell Junior High School. The school stood on the west side of the lot where Ruppenthal Middle School stands now.

"I thought he was awful shy in junior high school," she said of Dole.

"That's why, when I see him on television . . . I just can't believe what I see."

Jones said that although she didn't get any impressions while early in school that Dole might someday become president, he was well-liked.

"He smiled a lot," she said, "and he acted real friendly.

"I think everybody liked Bob."

When Dole was injured in World War II and was returned to the United States, Russellites showed

their respect for him by contributing money for his medical expenses.

"Not every town did for their boys what Russell did for him," Jones said.

About Dole's presidential prospects, Jones said, "I believe he'll be our next president. It would be another big feather in Russell's cap."

"I think he'd make a good president. He has all this experience. He's not just going in there blind." Commenting on Dole's distin-

guished political career, Jones said, "He has become quite a man. Fighting in Washington, D.C., all these years: That's really something."

"I think he's done remarkably well, going this far," she said. "It's really quite an honor for Russell."

"Nobody starting out with him would have thought there would be a Bob Dole from Russell, Kansas, that would go this far, and now Specter too. That's really something."

Dole Would Be Decisive President

By MATT O'DONNELL MILBERGER — While recovering from a heart attack at Central Kansas Medical Center in Great Bend, LaVern Becker received a welcome surprise — a letter faxed in from Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole.

In the middle paragraph of the letter it reads, "Knowing of the great respect in which your good deeds are held in the Russell Main Street team as well as a host of friends and supporters, I hope that you are able to gather that same determination and courage."

Becker said it is Dole's ability to remember names and people from his past that distinguishes him from many others.

Even back in high school, even though he was popular and gifted in athletics and academics, Becker remembers Dole being the same way.

"He was a likeable fellow," Becker mentions of his fellow classmate from the Russell High School Class of 1941. "Some athletes tend to get high heads, but he never did."

When Dole was in California campaigning for Sonny Bono a few months back, he immediately spotted former Bronco football teammate Elmer Leigan. He called Leigan over and introduced him to the crowd at the fundraiser.

Leigan, who now lives in the Palm Springs area, remembers Dole as the type of football player and athlete that could have gone professional if he wanted to.

"He was tough as nails when it came to busting heads," Leigan mentioned from his home in California.

In regards to Dole's appearance in high school, Becker said, "It

looked like he had a fresh haircut all the time."

Dole was a sophomore at The University of Kansas at the time he entered the service and went on to the war in Europe.

When he came back from the war, Dole was crippled and needed close to \$1,800 for an operation in Chicago. A cigar box was passed around, and the townspeople filled it.

Becker said that Dole still thinks that he owes a great deal of gratitude to the people of Russell because of that act of kindness.

Becker visited Dole in Washington about six to 10 years ago. "I pulled up a chair and put my feet on his desk," Becker boasts.

Becker also received a call from Dole just before the 40th anniversary reunion for their class. Dole was scheduled to emcee the event.

"He (told me), 'You can do it just as well as I can,'" Becker said. "I didn't do it as well as he could, but I did it."

Even though Dole has come off as very argumentative and cold to some voters in the past, Becker said Dole has "mellowed some" since those days.



LAVERN BECKER

"I think he'd make a good president," Becker said. "I think he'll be more decisive than what we have now," referring to Bill Clinton.

Even though Becker is still in a recovering stage because of his heart attack, he said he intends to meet up with Dole when he visits Russell April 14.

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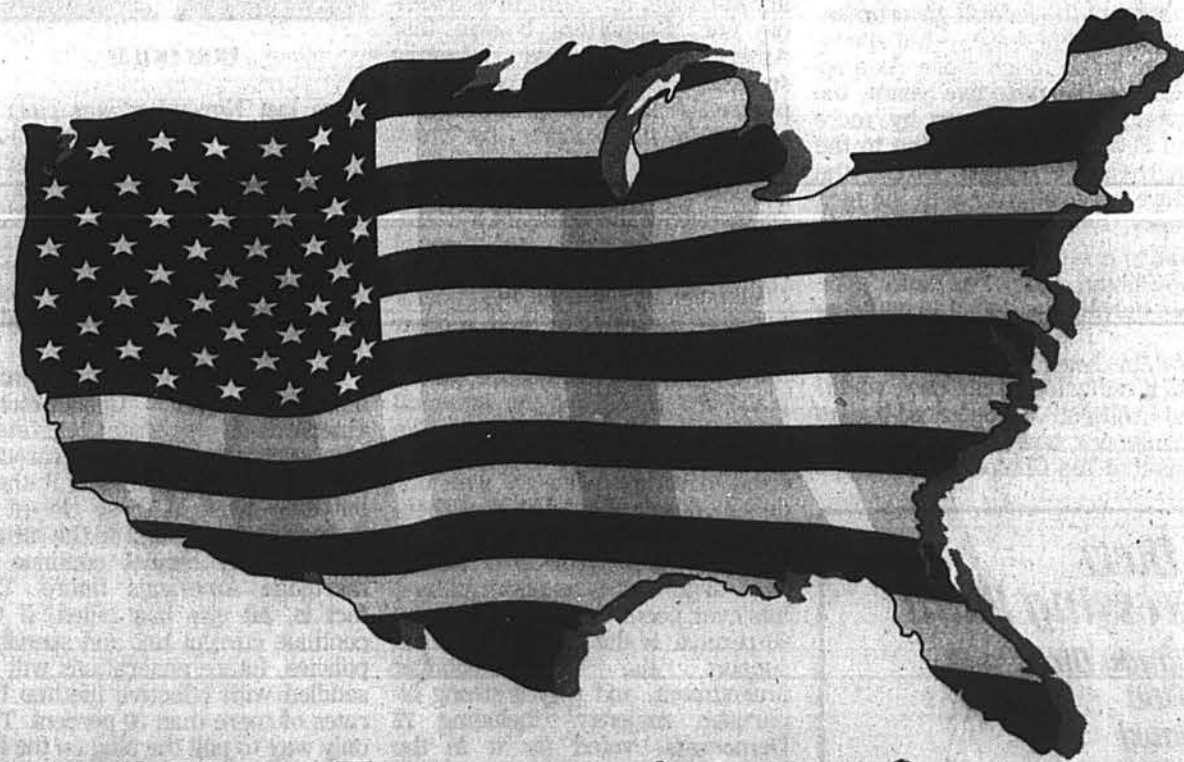
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