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HOMECOMING



On his way home to Russell after officially announcing his candidacy for the GOP nomination for president this week, Sen. Bob Dole arrives at the Hays airport Thursday evening. Photos by TOM DORSEY/Salina Journal

Dole is back in Russell for 'down time' from campaign

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING
The Salina Journal

HAYS — Francis McElroy and his wife, Frances, were on their way home to Vermont Thursday when they heard Sen. Bob Dole planned to arrive at Hays Municipal Airport.

The couple, who expected to spend the night at Salina, detoured off Interstate 70 to catch a glimpse of the Republican presidential candidate from Kansas.

"I admire the gentleman a great deal," said Francis McElroy, who spent the winter in Reno, Nev. "He's really proven himself the last few years. If it weren't for him, we'd really be on our knees."

The McElroys were among several dozen people who braved the western Kansas wind to greet Dole and his wife, Elizabeth, as they stepped off their campaign plane shortly after 6 p.m. to the applause of friends and supporters.

The schedule called for the Doles to be whisked away to the senator's hometown of Russell, about 30 minutes away. Instead, they stopped for a few minutes to shake hands and talk.

Dole repeatedly urged those in the crowd to be in Russell today for an 8 a.m. pancake breakfast at

Crowded field

Sen. Bob Dorman enters GOP race, Page 5
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the Veterans of Foreign Wars post. "Pancakes tomorrow," he said as he gave a thumbs-up sign.

Thursday's arrival ended a trip that started Monday in Topeka in the cold and rain. About 5,000 Dole supporters gathered inside the Expo center to hear the Senate majority leader officially declare he is a candidate for president in 1996.

In the days since, Dole has visited 11 cities in 10 states. He campaigned Thursday in Columbia, S.C., and Raleigh, N.C., before re-

turning to Kansas and the place of his roots.

It was in Russell where he announced his two previous runs for the presidency, in 1979 and 1987. Both failed. Dole told one supporter Thursday the 1996 campaign would be different.

"This time we're going to do it," he said.

Breakfast on Dole

At Russell, the town's more than 5,000 residents scrambled to prepare for today.

Early Thursday afternoon, workers readied picnic tables and platforms for media representatives and dignitaries. The breakfast is to be televised live by C-SPAN.

Jerry Willis, commander of the Russell VFW, of which Dole is a charter member, watched over the activity. He said organizers had no idea how many people to expect.

"We're hoping for many," he said.

The Dole campaign is picking up the tab for the breakfast. Willis said local organizers hired a man from Iowa who is known for his pancake flipping ability. He reportedly can turn out 1,000 an hour.

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Daniel Pickens of Pickens Inc. touches up letters Thursday afternoon on a grain elevator in downtown Russell.



Employees of the Water, Electric and Street Department of Russell construct a platform Thursday afternoon to be used this morning for Dole's pancake breakfast.

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Dole has dinner with family upon return

"There's nobody around here who can do that many in such a short time. They call him Mr. Pancake, I think," Willis said.

Willis said Russell residents already have started to think about the party they will throw if Dole wins the Republican nomination and eventually the keys to the White House.

"We're hoping. We'll do it. More than glad to," he said.

Meanwhile, Bob Dole, who is calling his visit here "down time" after a grueling week on the campaign trail, spent Thursday night at his sister's home, where Dole family members gathered for dinner.

Russell Townsley, who drove the Doles from Hays to Russell, said the menu probably would include the candidate's favorites — fried chicken and homemade vanilla ice cream.

Dole pays tribute to vets

By KELLY DANIEL
Special to The Capital-Journal

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., said Thursday it was a mistake for Congress to help build up U.S. forces during the Vietnam War, a week after a key official who prolonged the war apologized for doing so.

Dole, ending a 10-state kickoff tour for his third presidential campaign, said he wanted to avoid making a campaign speech while standing in front of a Vietnam memorial Thursday, and instead praised veterans for their sacrifices.

He also reminded his near-300 listeners that 50 years ago today, young Lt. Dole was horribly wounded while fighting World War II in Italy. His wounds left his right arm useless, prompting his trademark habit of clutching a pen in his right hand.

"This is a special day for Vietnam veterans," the senator proclaimed from the base of the Vietnam Veterans Park monument. "It took a long time



Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., left, gave Sen. Bob Dole some encouraging words during Dole's visit to Raleigh, N.C., Thursday.

for America to accept and recognize the sacrifices made by Vietnam veterans because it was a very unpopular war.

America's most unpopular war has been drawn back onto the forefront of discussion this week with the Monday publication of former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's "In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam."

In the book, McNamara, secretary of defense from 1961 to 1969, apologizes for his role in allowing the Vietnam conflict to escalate into a war that claimed more than 58,000 American soldiers.

Dole, a senator during the Vietnam War, said after his speech that he hadn't read McNamara's book but thought Congress probably erred in agreeing to heighten the war.

"If there was a mistake, we just kept incrementally getting involved with 10,000 here, 20,000 there," Dole said. "I think that was the mistake."

Dole formally announced in Topeka Monday that he will seek the GOP nomination for president. Thursday's stop was a quick bow to South Carolina's March 2 primary, but he created a temporary controversy over the location for his 30-minute speech.

A few Vietnam veterans arrived at the rally, angered that the gray marble monument honoring them was used as a political backdrop.

"These people didn't die for Bob Dole," said veteran Richard LaBarre, referring to the monument's engraved names of soldiers killed in Vietnam. "They didn't die for the Republican Party."

Vietnam veteran Davis Self echoed LaBarre, pointing to two World War II-era monuments down a grassy slope from the Vietnam monument.

"This is sacred," he said. "Why didn't they go to the World War II memorial nearby?"

The answer could be that former Gov. Carroll Campbell's brother is named on the memorial, and Dole has mentioned the South Carolina politician as a potential running mate.

"This is a non-partisan effort on my part," Dole said. "This is not a place for politics. This is a place of paying respect, to think about America, to think about our future and think about our role in the world."