

Media came, saw, chronicled

One look at Candy Crowley's right leg as she walked out of the Iowa Capitol after Bob Dole's appearance there last week gave a small clue of the wear and tear the national media endures while covering presidential campaigns.

Tuesday morning the black pantyhose the CNN reporter wore was run-free. By late morning, her fair skin showed clearly through holes and tears.

Such inconveniences go mostly unnoticed — it is just another day on the campaign trail.

When a high-profile figure chooses to run for the presidency — and especially if it is the front-runner for the GOP nomination, as is U.S. Senate majority leader Bob Dole — a crew of dedicated gypsies follows in tow.

When Dole embarked on his official candidacy announcement tour with a kickoff in Topeka last Monday, representatives of the media's elite were attaching and listening. His campaign staff was

pleased to leave Topeka with Dole's campaign airplane, a Boeing 727 dubbed "The Leader's Ship," jam-packed with 40 reporters, photographers and media crew members.

Newspapers such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, the Boston Globe, New York Newsday and the Los Angeles Times were represented. So was CNN, NBC, the Associated Press, Kyoto News, RTL-TV in Germany, Australian Broadcasting and even Vogue Magazine. Washington Post editor Bob Woodward, who made his mark during Watergate, also joined the first day of the campaign. He is writing a book on the '96 election.

Women were outnumbered 5-to-1. Comfort ruled with the dress code, though comfort generally meant low heels and well-fitting jackets and ties rather than blue jeans and sneakers.

Although Dole's campaign staff catered to the press corps' every need — from baggage handling to availability of newspapers to baskets of candy bars and fresh fruit — these people weren't there to be comfortable. They were there to record Dole's words and actions for readers and viewers all over the country and the world.

And they take their task seriously. They carry top-notch equipment, from laptop computers to modems to cellular telephones. They are unfazed by such things as airplane turbulence or delayed schedules. They are there to get the story and get it first.

Once a reporter steps on the plane, it doesn't matter who he or she works for.

The air is friendly. The elite doesn't segregate itself from those who don't travel with the corps all the time. And conversations run continually above the sound of fingers pounding small keyboards.

"I'm so excited," NBC reporter Joe Johns said airily as a bus rushed the corps from the Kansas Expocentre to Forbes Field last week. By the end of the day, he and everyone else had covered a similar rally in Exeter, N.H., and a \$1,000-a-plate fund-raiser in New York City.

"I haven't been doing it long," he said of following presidential campaigns, "but it could never be boring."

At the start of a campaign, a candidate and his or her staff treat the media very well, Johns said. It is a little like courtship — candidates live and die by what pops up on the next newscast or the next day's front page.

"They're full of hope," he said, "and this schedule is OK. You can get to bed relatively early. You still get up early, but you don't get to bed at 2 or 3 a.m. — that's a bad habit."

"I'll have to get artificial knees," Crowley said as she walked toward one of the media vans in Dole's motorcade from the Sheraton New York on Tuesday morning. On day two of Dole's tour, only 13 reporters and photographers were left — the rest decamped after the first day.

"I would rather be in New York for a few more hours and see some things," she said, "but what the hey?"

Crowley commented that Dole, 71, seemed to be a little tired at the New York fund-raiser.

"I was tired," she said. "The good part is, I don't have to be all smiley and nice and shake hands all the time and all that. But I'm used to it."

Peter Kleim joined the first day on the plane to cover Dole's kickoff for German television. His territory is the entire United States, and his story is whatever is big enough to interest German viewers. Last month it was the Academy Awards. Last week it was Dole.

In Germany, political candidates hold huge rallies to reach voters directly. In America, Kleim said, candidates rely more on television.

"Here you just go to big TV markets and just speak to the cameras," he said. "Now is my first time on a campaign, and there's a lot of traveling to deliver the same message."

"Usually politics is so boring," he continued. "But it's so colorful in the United States with the balloons, the hats, the flags. It's intriguing. And it makes your work easier."

Ralph Hallow of the Washington Times, who joined the group Monday and Tuesday, said excitement comes with the kickoff of a big campaign. If reporters keep up with a campaign's breakneck schedule for a longer stretch, he said reporters can get pretty "punch drunk."

Then, he said, all they want is room to work on the plane, for flight attendants to bring them some food and for everyone to leave them alone.

Most wear the hectic pace well. They get as infected with political fever as the politicians, and though some joke about how nice it would be to have a more stable life, they admit they are addicted.

"Every campaign is different," said Washington Post reporter Dan Balz, a veteran campaign trail hiker. "You assimilate the campaign travel. It gets repetitious, but it's not bad."

So what are Dole's chances? He has got an edge, Balz said, because "he's so much better known" than other GOP contenders, including Sens. Phil Gramm of Texas and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Gov. Pete Wilson of California.

Dole has also had a leadership position in Washington for 15 years and has been a national figure since he was the vice presidential candidate with Gerald Ford when Ford lost to Jimmy Carter in 1976.

"He's drawing big crowds," Balz said. "He hasn't done that before."

Dole brings 'events' tour nationwide

On campaign stops across the nation this past week, Bob Dole said repeatedly the 1996 election is all about reining in government and reconnecting Washington with the common sense values of U.S. citizens.

By contrast, though, Dole's weeklong announcement tour of his candidacy for the GOP presidential nomination was all about events.

When a presidential candidate appears at an organized gathering or rally — whether it be a pancake breakfast or a speech in front of a sea of supporters sprinkled with opponents — it is an "event."

Hundreds of hours of planning go into these events. Campaign staffers encourage a diverse group of people to sit near the candidate where they will be caught in television cameras. High school bands lend a touch of hometown pride. Red, white and blue balloons are blown up with either helium or regular air — depending on whether they will be released to fall onto an inside crowd or fly into the air outside.

Although events during the first two days of Dole's tour last week were similar, with essential repeats of the same speech at each stop, each event had a life of its own.

For example, when Dole kicked off his tour at the Kansas Expocentre in Topeka Monday morning, he faced a wildly cheering crowd of about 5,000. He was pumped up by the show of support from Kansas citizens as well as dignitaries, including Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum and Gov. Bill Graves.

A few hours later when Dole arrived in Exeter, N.H., the reception was more mixed. While Republicans close to the podium in front of Exeter's Town Hall hooted and hollered for him, opponents gathered at the rear booed Dole intermittently.

Still another "event" at a \$1,000-a-head fund-raiser at the swanky Sheraton New York in Manhattan gave a somewhat weary Dole a boost with loud cheers and energetic endorsements from New York Gov. George Pataki and Dole strategist Sen. Alfonse D'Amato of New York.

Dole gained momentum Tuesday at events in Columbus, Ohio, and Des Moines, Iowa.

Told by Ohio GOP representatives it wasn't cheering loudly enough as Dole waited to make his appearance, the Columbus crowd, packed in the state's granite and limestone capitol, let loose enough roars to energize Dole into putting more fervor in the same old speech. What reporters called his "big line" — "I have been tested and tested and tested in many ways. I am not afraid to lead, and I know the way" — drew the biggest response yet.

Knowing they had a winning event on their hands, Dole campaign staffers wanted to milk it before departing for Des Moines.

"We may have to spin a bit on this," press advance director Mark Rosenker said into a mini-microphone at his wrist to the rest of the staff.

He did. As he weaved through the crowd, Rosenker noted, "We had a great first day, but now he's gotten loose."

Des Moines wasn't quite as energetic, but the comfort level was higher. Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad had been traveling with Dole Monday and Tuesday, and the Midwest grass-roots style of the site of the first presidential caucus seemed to suit Dole, a native of 4,800-population Russell.

It isn't easy to pull off events that reflect positively on television or in print, staffers said. It takes hundreds of volunteers willing to paint signs, blow up balloons, organize seating and handle inquiries. The slightest disorganization can leave the impression the candidate is flawed, a critical mistake on such a tour.

In other words, appearance is everything.

Candy Crowley, a reporter for CNN, noticed. She said she liked the contrast of balloons dropping on the crowd in Topeka while they were released into the air during the outside rally.

"This was a good event," she commented after the Columbus show. "Whoever put this together did a great job."

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Candidates promote conservative agendas

Dole would stymie Clinton nominee

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Dr. Henry Foster's bid to be surgeon general is all but dead, said Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, who said he may use his position to block a vote on the nomination.

Dole also singled out the controversial movie "Priest" for criticism, and suggested political leaders have a responsibility to engage the entertainment industry in debate about the content of movies and television programs.

"If I'm the president of the United States, I'm going to encourage people to turn off their TV sets and not patronize these movies," he said.

Dole is the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination and his comments broadcast Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" appeared aimed at conservatives who are angered by what they see as America's moral decline.

Another contender for the GOP presidential nomination, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, reiterated his pledge Sunday to end affirmative action and balance the federal budget by the end of his first term.

The film "Priest" has generated controversy for its portrayal of troubled Roman Catholic clerics.

"It's about a gay priest, an alcoholic priest. It gives the impression that all Catholic priests are like these two," said Dole, a



Gramm

Dole

Methodist from Kansas.

He noted that protests by Catholic groups forced the film's distributor to delay its national release, which had been slated for Good Friday.

"I don't want to be a censor," he said. "My view is that shame is still an important tool in America."

On the Foster nomination, Dole said it may not even get out of committee.

"If it does, I'm not certain that I'll call it up," he said. "I'd say the nomination is 'in extremis.' It's not very viable right now."

Foster has run into opposition on Capitol Hill for understating the number of abortions he has performed.

Both Dole and Gramm said they do not believe there are enough votes in Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to ban abortion. But both suggested that if elected president, they would use the executive power to limit access to abortion.

"We all know that there is not a consensus in the party or in the country to reform the Constitution," Gramm said. "But that doesn't mean there aren't things we can do."

Reports says Dole often flew on private airplanes

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole has flown 187 times since 1993 aboard private jets, most of them owned by corporations that had interest in congressional business, according to Newsweek.

The most frequent sponsor of Dole's private flights was Archer Daniels Midland Co., an agribusiness owned by Dole ally Dwayne Andreas, Newsweek said in its April 24 edition, on newsstands today. The magazine said Dole has sponsored tax breaks to back the company's development of ethanol.

"It is ludicrous to suggest that

Senator Dole's position on any of these issues has been influenced by campaign contributions or entirely legal and fully disclosed rides on corporate planes," Dole spokesman Nelson Warfield told the magazine.

ADM ferried Dole on 29 flights, Newsweek said, and Dole's political committee complied with campaign finance law by reimbursing the company the equivalent of first-class airfare. But that was less than 25 percent of what it cost to operate the jet.

U.S. Tobacco Inc., which has contributed \$40,000 to Dole campaigns since 1987, flew Dole aboard its planes 26 times.