

Salina, Kansas

August 23, 1995

GRASPING AT STRAWS



Dole makes a point to voters during his 10-minute address in Ames' Hilton Coliseum.



Photos by Kelly Fresnell/Salina Journal

Russell residents Vernon New (from right), and his wife, Reba, and Adolph Reisig, Hoys, rise to the occasion during a lull between voting and speeches by the candidates.

Loud and in your face, it's politics in Iowa

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING
The Salina Journal

AMES, Iowa — One by one, the men with the dark suits and the big smiles paraded across the stage, much like contestants in a Miss America contest.

Dole. Wilson. Gramm. Keyes. Buchanan. Lugar. Specter. Alexander. Taylor.

All seekers of the key to the White House.

Lights flashed and music blared as they waded to the almost 10,000 spectators gathered inside the Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa. The prize this cool night in corn country would be first place in the Iowa Straw Poll, billed as the "first major event of the 1996 Republican presidential campaign."

Earlier, the notes of "Come Home Bill Bailey" mixed with the chants of hundreds of supporters shouting "We want Dole. We want Dole."

In response, a backer of business executive Morry Taylor, a longshot candidate, flipped a sign and yelled, "Elect

Taylor." Suddenly, a white Frisbee emblazoned with the name of Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar sailed into an area occupied by supporters of Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas. A young boy picked up the Frisbee and ran back to his seat.

This is politics in Iowa — loud, emotional and, most of all, personal.

"This is retail politics at its best. Everybody gets an opportunity to meet the candidates," said Brian Kennedy, chairman of the state's Republican party.

The politicians woo Iowa voters because the Midwest state is the first test



Bob Zick, Oakdale, Minn., tries to rally support for Dole Saturday from the floor of the Hilton Coliseum. Zick had snuck onto the floor without proper credentials to incite Dole voters.

That's the reason Republican wannabes were in Ames last weekend, serving pork burgers, beer and other refresh-

ments, shaking hands and telling anyone who would listen about their appreciation for Iowa.

"Don't make any mistake. It's going to happen in Iowa. This is a crucial place," Dole said shortly after he arrived at a hilltop rally that overlooked the rally on the coliseum grounds staged by Gramm.

The atmosphere mimicked a carnival. There was music, funny hats and silly behavior.

Each candidate had a tent. The more popular — Dole, Gramm and commentator Pat Buchanan — had bigger tents and more of them.

Gramm also had actor Charlton Heston, who helped dish up pork and beans. And Morry Taylor, in an attempt to attract attention, arrived in a caravan of motor homes and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

At one point, an airplane trailing a sign, "Go with a winner — vote Dole," flew over the grounds.

► See FANS, Page A6

Continued on next page