

who, in 1871, trekked west from Ripon, Wisconsin, the birthplace of the GOP.

In any case, it's hard to say who's luckier: the folks of Russell, who get to claim two national success stories, or the candidates themselves, who can take advantage of the limestone buildings and broad streets as an all-American backdrop for their national campaigns and ambitions. Dole, the senior senator from Kansas and favorite son of Russell, did just that when he returned in 1988 to announce a presidential bid, and he was back again in April after his formal announcement in Topeka. Specter, the senior senator from Pennsylvania, stopped by on April 1 to put a small-town flourish on the end of his announcement tour.

Some Russell residents support a Dole/Specter ticket for '96, and a few prefer the lineup the other way

1. The view from Russell County Republican headquarters on Main Street. 2. Often-published stock photos of Russell's favorite sons at the offices of the *Russell Record*. 3. Discussing the issues of the day over coffee at the Russell Inn on Main Street. 4. A Little Leaguer from the Russell Senators on the field behind Russell High School. 5. Grain elevators full of winter wheat in the middle of town. 6. Boosters at the beauty parlor on Wichita and Main streets. 7. Family home and birthplace of Russell's favorite son, Bob Dole



around. Like pork-barrel budgeting, this debate is less about ideology than whom you know. Bob Dole's roots here are deeper: He was born in a house on North Maple Street on July 22, 1923, at the high point of Russell's oil boom. Dole manned the soda



fountain at the old Dawson Drug Store at 808 Main Street during high school. And he returned here after being wounded in Italy in World War II, three weeks before V-E day. Residents nursed him back to health, pooling their money to help his family pay for the physical therapy he needed.

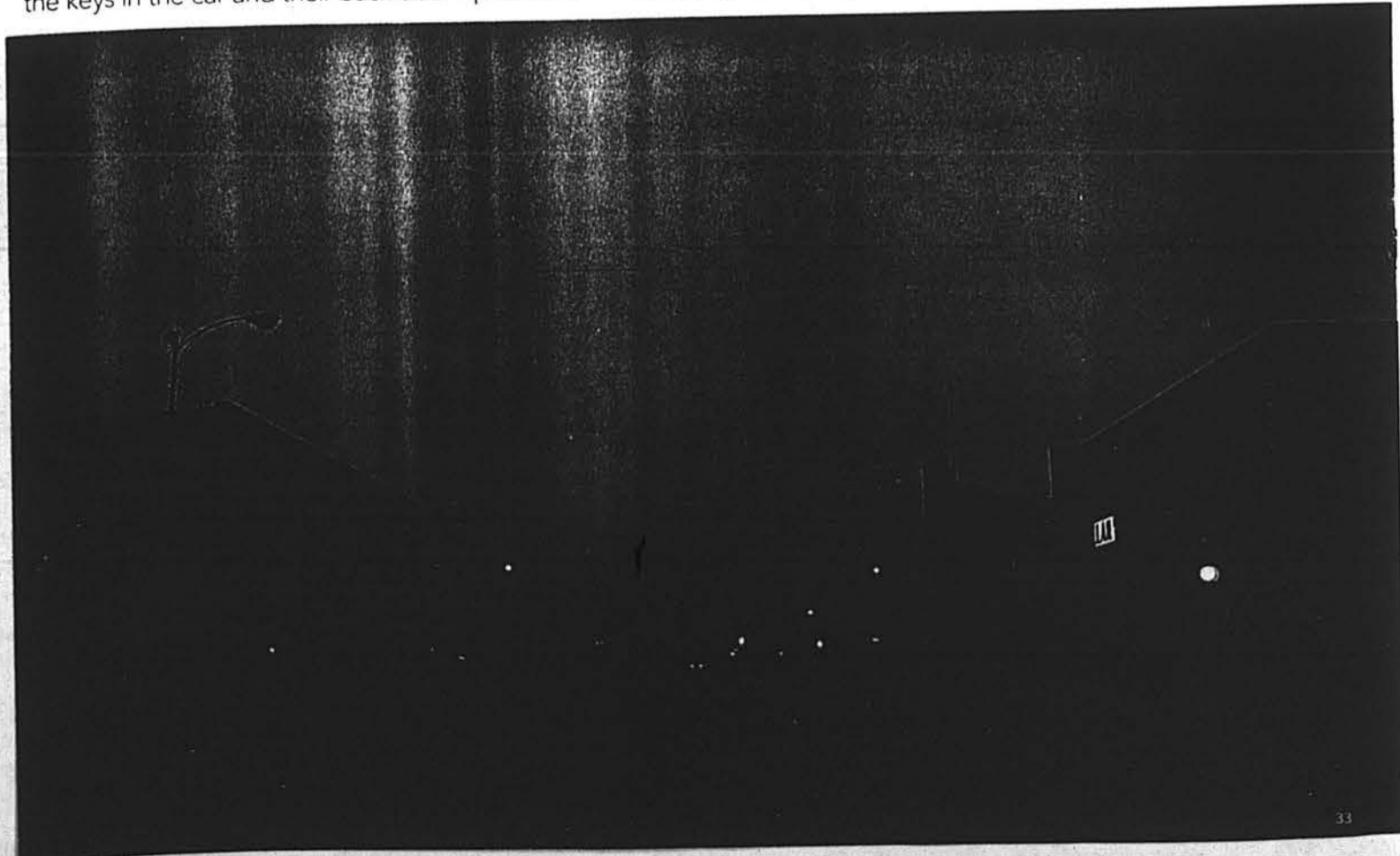
Arlen Specter's parents, Harry and Lillie, rolled into town in 1942, when Arlen was 12 years old, and they Allan D. Evans, editor and publisher of the town's newspaper, *The Russell Record*, shows off his special issues of the town's two most famous citizens. Above, the town's highlights recorded on a banner

eventually built a scrap-metal empire from the remnants of the dried-up wells after the boom. The only Jews in town, the Specters moved east to Pennsylvania when Arlen's sister, Shirley, reached marrying age and Arlen was 18. Arlen's older brother, Morton, stayed on alone to run the family business.

As these pictures suggest, Russell is a quiet town where change comes slowly—the place boasts 17 churches and no Wal-Mart ... yet. Sure, the police chief is aware that just a few miles south, I-70 is a major overland drug route, but most people leave the keys in the car and their back door open. Dole



Above, selling local produce and a local product on the side of the road. Below, driving down Main Street on a foggy dawn sometimes bears criticism for harping on an idyllic America that was lost, or maybe never was. But if you stop by the Courtyard Cafe on Main Street—where problems get hashed out over a cup of coffee—you'll recognize where he first found it.



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Editorial Opinion

Dole Suck-up Watch 16

Pleasing the right, not the elderly

"Antony had Cicero's head and hands brought to Rome and publicly displayed, a sight to make Romans shudder, for they saw there, they thought, not Cicero's face, but an image of Antony's soul."

— Plutarch

All over the country, Republicans are trying to convince us that they have come to rescue Medicare, not to bury it.

But last week in Washington, in the latest of his frequent attempts to convince the far-out right that he is truly one of them, Bob Dole was foolish enough to be honest about his record.

In a speech to the American Conservative Union, the Republican presidential hopeful reminded his audience that, back in 1965, he voted against the creation of Medicare.

The Senate majority leader was then a junior congressman from western Kansas, and was one of only 12 members of the House to vote against the capstone of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society — an all inclusive medical insurance plan for older Americans.

He and his small band of brothers were against Medicare, he said, "because we knew it wouldn't work."

For a senator to say that about Medicare today is like a modern airline executive bragging that he tried to talk the Wright brothers out of their hare-brained scheme, "because I knew that man would never fly."

The simple truth is that Medicare has worked, it does work, and it can continue to work, with much less radical surgery than the Republican Congress has in mind for it.

The simple fact is that before Medicare was created, most poor people in America were elderly. Now, most poor people in America are children.

That is not only because things got worse for children, though they have gotten a lot worse, but also because things got better for the old. For a great many of the old, Medicare was the difference.

The insurance plan needs to be reformed, but no more so than the half-dozen other times when it was technically in danger of going broke and the bipartisan leadership of Congress "saved" it through a simple adjustment in the rates — just as private insurance companies do all the time — without the current levels of partisan bickering or demagoguery.

The evidence is clear that, by trying to drive both affluent clients and many doctors and hospitals away from reliance on Medicare, the Republican masters of Congress are out to destroy Medicare. But seldom, if ever, will you hear anyone come as close to admitting that as Dole did in his recent speech.

Obviously, Dole thinks winning the support of the radical right — the support of folks who worry more about the principle of socialized medicine than the reality of old people going broke to stay alive — is of more value to him than the supposedly all-powerful senior citizens lobby.

It makes one wonder just how hard a President Dole would fight to preserve Medicare.