

ROBERT J. DOLE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

ROBERT J. DOLE

June 22, 2007

Interviewer

Richard Norton Smith

Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics
2350 Petefish Drive
Lawrence, KS 66045
Phone: (785) 864-4900
Fax: (785) 864-1414

Dole 6-22-07—p. 2

Smith: Last time, we got you elected to the Senate.

Dole: It was '68.

Smith: Yes. First of all, tell me, how did you pick a staff? Presumably, it was a larger staff in the Senate than you had in the House. What was the process of adjustment, I guess, from the House to the Senate?

Dole: Well, let's see, '68. I can't remember how many people I brought from—I surely brought my House staff with me. I can't remember who they were. But I think in those days I personally interviewed everybody. I mean, later on, I let Sheila [Burke] do it and others in the office looking for expertise in the right committees, but—

Smith: How important was it that they be a Kansan?

Dole: It was pretty important to me, at least early on. Somebody come in your office and say, "I'm from New Jersey," or, "I'm from Wyoming," or whatever, kind of nice to have a Kansas—but they didn't have to be from Kansas. We tried to keep a good team on the ground in Kansas, you know, constituent.... Of course, in the early days, you know, I wasn't going anywhere in the Senate, so we spent all our time on constituent service, which really pays off. You can't beat it. Some small thing you do today will pay big dividends the rest of your political life because those people are never going to forget it.

Smith: Is that a lesson, in a sense, that you learn first in the House and sort of carry over to the Senate?

Dole: Yes. In the House, you know, you ran every two years, so if you weren't tending to the store, you could be looking for work. I went home almost every other, I don't know, weekend early on in the Senate and the House, and that pays off, too, if people have seen you around other than election years.

Smith: Is the Senate full of people who forget that lesson, I mean, over time, that—

Dole: I think their hearing improves every election year; they hear voices they haven't heard for years. "Oh, I've been thinking about that problem, yep. I've got my staff working on it now," dah, dah, dah, dah. Yes, I think there's some of that, and I don't say it's intentional, but they get wrapped up in other things; and, boy, once you forget where you're from, you're in trouble in this business.

Smith: When did you hire Jo-Anne [Coe]?

Dole: Oh, jiminy. I'd have to check. I've got a record, but—

Smith: It was in the Senate?

Dole: Yes.

Smith: She hadn't worked for you in the House.

Dole: Yes, she made a big difference. The stuff I do now longhand, responding to letters, I have to do longhand, and Ruth Ann Komarek does it. I just give it all to Jo-Anne and say, "Here's another pile," and sooner or later, it would be all the answers. Whatever it was, whether it was raising money or—and she had this, you know—she could call CEOs, "Jo-Anne Coe calling," And they'd take the call.

Smith: Why do you think that was?

Dole: I don't know. They knew she was very efficient, and she cut to the chase. She didn't waste their time, was tough as nails. I guess her father was an admiral. Maybe she learned it from her father, but no nonsense and—

Smith: Utterly loyal.

Dole: Oh, yes. She'd slug anybody that said anything bad about Bob Dole. [laughs] Maybe too loyal. But she would also tell me, and I don't know specifics here, but, "I

Dole 6-22-07—p. 4

don't think that's a good idea," or, "No, don't do that. Don't call that person," dah, dah, dah. She was pretty careful. She didn't want any ethics or stories or—

Smith: It's legendary, the toughest job in the White House, and, presumably, you know, a lot of political offices is whoever's job it is to say, "That's a bad idea. Don't do that." You know?

Dole: Yes. Well, Sheila Burke would do that, too.

Smith: Yes. But the point is, you recognize the need to have people like that around.

Dole: Yes. Terry [unclear] is another one who sometimes would say, "Not sure I'd do this."

I'd say, "Well, I'll do it anyway." You know? You didn't always listen, but it was certainly nice to have—sometimes they would point out a very obvious reason you shouldn't do A, B, or C or should do A, B, or C that you hadn't even thought of. So if you kind of keep it all to yourself, as some people do, close to your chest, you know, you can make mistakes. I don't mean you have to air everything. Sometimes you have to make a decision on your own and keep it.

Smith: Fundraising must have been, almost from day one, of a different level from what it had been up until then. Was that the case, and how much of it was hassle?

Dole: Oh, I hated it. The bane of my existence was fundraising. I didn't mind going to fundraising events, but to get on the telephone and to call somebody and say, you know, "I'd like to have you send me a thousand dollars," I could hardly do it. What's the person going to do? They going to say no? I guess some did or some said, "Let me think about it," or whatever. But particularly when you're the Leader of the Senate or the Republican Leader, and you're calling up and saying, dah, dah, dah. No, I wouldn't mind calling for, say, Rudy Boschwitz or somebody else, and say, "I'm trying to help Rudy raise some money." Now, Elizabeth [Dole] is just the opposite; she's on the phone right now. She'll be on the phone today for six, seven hours, and nothing wrong with it; you have to do it.

Smith: Do you think it's something about your upbringing that makes it difficult for you to ask for yourself, as opposed to someone else?

Dole: Yes, I think that I've never been one to ask for a lot of help. I try to do it myself, whether it's getting dressed or dah, dah, whatever. Maybe I learned it in the hospital. But once you make that personal call, you are going to be beholden in some way. It doesn't mean you sell your soul, but at least the fellow can say, "Remember when you called me in March and I sent you that check? I thought you'd like to know I've got a little problem here." So—

Smith: Without naming names, obviously, have there been instances where people pretty blatantly wanted something in return? I mean, does that happen?

Dole: Oh, I'm sure that happened. Yes, yes. But there are people like Dean Evans, since passed away, who had raised a lot of money for me. I can't remember him ever asking for any—he just liked me and he thought I was doing a good job. I beat the guy he supported for Congress, Keith Sebelius, and we became good friends. Now, Jordan Ames from Wichita is another great friend. He would never call for himself, but he would call and say, "I've got this great friend in Phoenix who ought to be -working for the DOD [Department of Defense]," or, "This guy would be a great district judge." I mean, things like that, and not because he gave me money, because he was my friend, and he thought this was a great idea. And it obviously didn't hurt him any to go to somebody and he'd say, "Well, Senator Dole's going to nominate or send your name in for a nomination." But he was just a good friend. He wouldn't ask me to do anything I shouldn't do.

Smith: Did you think about what your priorities were going to be as a freshman senator? I mean, your first speech, of course, was about—

Dole: Disabilities.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 6

Smith: —disabilities. What prompted that? Was that just a natural—

Dole: Well, in the old days—they don't do it much any more, but even then they didn't do a lot of it, I guess, what, forty, fifty, sixty years ago, when your maiden speech was quite an event. You just didn't get up the first day and pop off like they do now. I mean, once you set foot on the Senate floor, you can get up and say anything. Even when I arrived, at least you waited a while and sort of understood where the men's room was and where the Democrats were seated and where you were seated and all that. But it was important to me, and so I thought, "Well, let's talk about something that maybe will make a difference." I don't remember the gallery being packed or my room full of colleagues, but I did it every year after that on that date or close to the date, depending on when the Senate was in session. But then I sort of became, according to the *Washington Evening Star*, the old paper; I became the sheriff of the Senate for [Richard M.] Nixon on the Vietnam War.

Smith: Now, what kind of ongoing contact, if any, did you have with the White House, say during 1969, either the president himself or Haldeman or Ehrlichman?

Dole: I was trying to think when the Hatfield-McGovern amendments; when were they, what year they started, but—

Smith: The fall of '69, when the moratoriums and the demonstrations were really building?

Dole: The bombing of Cambodia. I can't quite remember when—

Smith: Spring of '70.

Dole: Was that '70?

Smith: Yes.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 7

Dole: So I think Lyn Nofziger sort of got me involved. He was in the White House, or at least I think he was at least advising the White House. We had been at the RNC together. I remember making television spots on the Vietnam War, sort of the anti-protestor spot, sort of lauding the servicemen and women, dah, dah, dah, dah.

Smith: Now, the implication of that, of course, is that the White House wasn't altogether happy with the Leaders it had.

Dole: Hugh Scott.

Smith: Yes. Well, let me back up for a minute, because your first few months, of course, were the last months of Ev [Everett] Dirksen's life, and you obviously must have seen Dirksen in action before.

Dole: Yes, but really not much. Let's see. When did he die? Was it April?

Smith: It was September.

Dole: Or September? So, you know, I'd had little opportunity to watch Dirksen, but I don't think he was even himself, February, March, April, May, when he finally got sick and wasn't even around.

Smith: He didn't welcome you and the other newcomers to the Senate in any kind of formal way?

Dole: I don't remember any event that really—just sort of separate from anything else. I have a better recollection of Senator [Roman] Hruska, for some reason, maybe because he was a neighbor [Nebraska] and he sort of took an interest in me and this kind of thing. He later said mediocrity wasn't a bad thing.

Smith: The Supreme Court. [laughs]

Dole 6-22-07—p. 8

Dole: But he was, I thought, a pretty good guy.

Smith: Yes, who were the people who sort of stood out at that point on either side of the aisle, or who, I mean—

Dole: Well, let's see. The senator from Mississippi, Senator—

Smith: [John] Stennis.

Dole: Stennis. I think I've told the story about my predecessor, Senator [James] Carlson, said, "When you get to the Senate, you want to go have a visit with Senator Stennis and get to know him. He's a gentleman," dah, dah, dah. And he was. And I did; I followed his advice and told Senator Stennis that his good friend, Senator Carlson, said it would be good if we got acquainted. He was just a good, you know—I didn't agree with him philosophically on everything, but from the standpoint of being a gentleman and never getting up and railing against somebody else in the Senate and all those things that I did sometimes, it didn't come from him, so—

Smith: Was he emblematic of the way the Senate had been?

Dole: Particularly the South, and the other senator from Mississippi, chairman of the Judiciary Committee—

Smith: [James O.] Eastland?

Dole: Eastland has his cigar, and he would kind of slump down in his seat. He was pretty tough, but he's a different person than—see what the change is today with, you know, Trent Lott, for example, and, of course, I think he worked for Congressman [_____] Smith, I think, on the House side. But anyway, Senator Howard Baker was there at the time and Senator [Clifford] Hanson and Senator [Carl] Curtis, Senator [Gordon] Allott from Colorado.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 9

Smith: Was Margaret Chase Smith still in the Senate?

Dole: Oh, yes, she was there and had a rose on her desk every morning.

Smith: Was she the only woman?

Dole: Yes, she was the only woman. In fact, I went up to do a fundraiser for her in Maine, and she was very friendly. I never understood why she wouldn't let Jimmy Stewart become a general, you know, the actor. She blocked his nomination every year, for some reason, I don't know.

Smith: Ed Brooke was in the Senate.

Dole: Ed Brooke was there. Yes, that's right. Were you with Ed early on?

Smith: No, not until later on. But then, you know, the Republican Party had two wings, and it had a northeastern—

Dole: A [Barry] Goldwater wing.

Smith: Liberal.

Dole: Scott wing.

Smith: Yes, you know, Jake [Jacob] Javits was in the Senate.

Dole: Oh, he was good, too.

Smith: Was he?

Dole: Right, a hard worker. I remember on the New York vote on aiding New York, which a lot of Republicans opposed, he said, "All I want is your vote on a cloture. You

Dole 6-22-07—p. 10

don't have to vote for the authorization or the appropriation. Let me bring it up for a vote," which I agreed to do. But he was very good, very persuasive, tougher than nails. But he believed in the Republican Party, just thought it ought to shift a little.

Smith: That wing of the party is essentially gone, isn't it?

Dole: It's down to three or four in the Senate; a couple are from Maine and Arlen Specter and maybe Norm Coleman from Minnesota. There are not many left. I'm missing one, but—

Smith: What kind of contact did you have with Nixon himself during that first term? Obviously, he was responsible for your becoming RNC chairman.

Dole: I remember the convention in Miami, where I was on the Escort Committee in '68, and I think there were eight of us on the Escort—that was my really first contact at any level. I mean, he had been in Kansas, in Pratt, Kansas, to raise money for me. But when I became chairman, I saw Nixon fairly often, not alone, but I was invited to cabinet meetings, Republican meetings, leadership meetings, not cabinet meetings. You never sat around the table, but you sat along with the staff. That ended when I think I mentioned Watergate once too often in one of those meetings. I was picking up a lot of static around the country on Watergate. As I remember, for some reason I wasn't invited to very many meetings after that, probably the work of [H.R.] Haldeman's office.

Smith: Haldeman was a piece of work.

Dole: Yes. [John] Ehrlichman, I didn't know very well, but there was some guy named [Bruce] Kehrli, too, who, generally, when you called, you'd get Kehrli. I think he was Haldeman's assistant. And Haldeman's daughter worked in the Senate cloakroom. I think it was long after he'd gone; very nice young lady. But Haldeman didn't know anything about Congress that I know of, and he was just tough and loyal to Nixon, and that was the only game in town for him. So putting up with these senators and stuff must

Dole 6-22-07—p. 11

have been a pain in the rear. But Ehrlichman, I barely knew him, knew who he was, but...

Smith: President [Gerald] Ford told the story about the one time Ehrlichman deigned to come up to the Hill for a meeting with the leadership, he didn't make any friends by falling asleep.

Dole: He fell asleep?

Smith: Yes, not a good sign.

Dole: That's reserved for [S.I.] Hayakawa from California. He used to sleep daily, take little naps.

Smith: Yes, what do you do? Do you cover—I assume both parties have members, maybe they're elderly, maybe they're a little bit past their prime—

Dole: Or maybe they're—

Smith: Or maybe they've had a drink.

Dole: You try to keep them off the floor. I can, without naming names, recall a couple on our side, we had to, as quietly as we could, escort from the floor and get them back in the cloakroom before the press saw somebody and wrote a big story back home that so-and-so is—you know. I think there were some on the other side, too.

Smith: Yes. I assume that would be even more of a problem now with television.

Dole: Oh, yes.

Smith: I mean, you don't have that luxury.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 12

Dole: I think one who criticized the [John] Tower nomination had a problem himself.

Smith: Yes.

Dole: Don't throw bricks, you know.

Smith: How did you become Republican National chairman?

Dole: Well, let's see. I got a call from—I don't think I lobbied for it. I don't know precisely how. I know how it almost slipped away. I know all the details on that, but I think the call was from the president. I don't know whether it was a total surprise or not, because I had been pretty active on his behalf in the Senate. But then once that call was made, a little opposition started developing in the Senate with Hugh Scott and [William] Saxbe from Ohio sort of leading the charge. I think Senator Scott—we were good friends, but I think he felt that I was fairly vocal, that maybe I might upstage the Republican Senate Leader, though he had been chairman of the Party himself. So I think that's why he had Saxbe do it, said, I "couldn't sell beer on a troop ship," or something. [laughs] That was one of Saxbe's comments.

Smith: I mean, it's a funny line. [laughs]

Dole: Yes.

Smith: It probably didn't seem funny at the time.

Dole: So then they called me up and said, "Well, we're sorry, this is not going to happen," because I remember I got the call late afternoon, and so I headed for the RNC. Rogers Morton was the chairman. I started trying to figure out what to do, and I remember it was raining cats and dogs. I can't remember how I got together with the White House—from Oklahoma, the speechwriter, the—

Smith: Bryce.

Dole: Harlow.

Smith: Bryce Harlow.

Dole: Because Bryce had been very friendly to me and I knew him pretty well, and he used to come in my office and visit. So he came up to the RNC and we sat there for I don't know how many hours, trying to figure out some way, because I threatened to leave the Senate. I said, "You know, this is going to be very embarrassing to me because the word has sort of leaked out that I'm going to be the new chairman, and then something happens that it's not going to happen. I don't know how I could handle that at home. What would be the reason, unless I said I decided I didn't want to be chairman?" And I said, "I'm not going to do that."

So after almost an all-night session, I remember it was a written agreement, or a written statement of principles or something, where I would stay on for a while, and Nixon would help me raise money for my '74 election. I think I would even help select a new chairman, but they already had [George H.W.] Bush in mind. I remember going up to the U.N. [United Nations] to talk to him, and, of course, he already wasn't any big surprise; he knew he was going to be the next chairman.

Smith: Was that difficult?

Dole: Yes, in a way, because I knew I wasn't leaving voluntarily. My theory was, we had been through a tough election, and I wanted to enjoy being chairman for a while. We were not raising money and beating people over their head just to be chairman of the party, because we were doing some pretty good things. We took the front doors off of the open door policy, we started working with a group of black Republicans, Republican Conference. So we thought we were doing some things that maybe they weren't huge, but they were at least reaching out to people. And that's the time—who was it? Phillips wrote the book *The Emerging Republican Majority*.

Smith: Yes, Kevin Phillips.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 14

Dole: Who later turned far, far, far to the left. His wife used to work in the Ways and Means Committee in the House.

Smith: Do you sense that Nixon cared personally about those kinds of party-building activities?

Dole: I think to some extent. I remember, I think it was '68, maybe it was '72, I wanted to present Mrs. [Patricia] Nixon with something Republican on it, a sweater or something, and she said, "Well, we've got to worry about the D's as well as the R's," or something; so I never got to make the presentation. So whether that was something that they had talked about—I think he wanted to be the man who brought us to power, and we stayed in power. He had a lot of good ideas, as you know, a lot of very progressive ideas for—I don't know if they could get the nomination today. Probably not.

Smith: He'll always be a man without a party. There's really no obvious place for someone like Nixon.

Dole: Welfare reform, Environmental Protection Agency.

Smith: Yes. Of course, you spoke at Mrs. Nixon's funeral. Did you have much contact with her?

Dole: Not a lot. I don't think she had a lot of contact with many legislative types. I don't know what—well, you probably know better than I. Her contacts were fairly private, personal friends; probably was not a very public person, not like Julie [Nixon], for example.

Smith: Right. Let me back up because, of course, Vietnam is raging.

Dole: Oh, yes.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 15

Smith: You, at one point, offered an amendment to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, ironically, sort of parallel with what some Democrats are talking about now in terms of the Iraqi War resolution. What was the background of that?

Dole: I've been called about that because some law firm here was checking it out, I guess for Republicans. I don't know. Not our law firm, another—that's when [J. William] Fulbright said I stole his cow. You know, it was his amendment. Of course, they later passed an amendment in the committee, but mine had already passed, so—

Smith: What was the point of the whole exercise? I mean, why were you introducing his amendment, in effect?

Dole: You know, he was kind of had a strange person in many ways and kind of arrogant, and I thought, well, you know, why not some junior senator have a little, I don't say fun, but participate in the process here a little bit. So I assume there was a little scheming going on.

Smith: Did he resent that?

Dole: Plus, we knew it was going to pass because there were a lot of people felt, you know, that [Lyndon B.] Johnson took this little Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and it ballooned. You know, we sent more troops, more casualties, more—and I think Fulbright voted against it initially, one of two, as I recall.

Smith: Right.

Dole: So I think he felt some ownership there and probably did, but I don't remember what—I was probably a little impulsive. I think I just decided, "Oh, let's have a little fun today." [laughter]

Smith: Now, you also established sort of this, to some people, unlikely friendship with Hubert [H.] Humphrey.

Dole: Oh, yes. We were great buddies.

Smith: And how did that start?

Dole: Well, I think we knew each other through Dwayne Andreas, Archer Daniels Midland, who had the Sea View Hotel in Bal Harbour, and Humphrey used to go there a lot. So did George McGovern. I mean, mostly Democrats; there weren't very many Republicans around. I think that Hubert said, "I'm going down to Bal Harbour in a couple of weeks. Why don't you go down and spend the weekend. You'd have a great time," dah, dah, dah, and I took him up on it. We were on the Ag Committee, too, which—you know, you get to be friends when you're seated across each other. We used to have a lot of fun. I remember once he was advocating more for dairy farmers than even the dairy farmers wanted, you know, so I pulled out a quart of milk and handed it to him across the table. He didn't want only parity; he wanted more than parity. And he was just a good friend, good sense of humor and—

Smith: Did he ever talk, by the way, about LBJ? I mean, that clearly must have been a very awkward relationship that they had.

Dole: No. For LBJ to send him a pencil with an eraser. That's all he needs as vice president. [laughter] That wasn't a very close relationship. But Hubert was, you know, a great orator and speaker, and he had trouble, sometimes, ending. He had the Joe Biden Syndrome; I guess maybe Biden has the Humphrey Syndrome. He used to get Humphrey; then he'd go on *Issues and Answers*. It would be not plural; it would be singular, *Issue and Answer*, and it would be over. The program is over, and the guy has got a whole list of questions, and time is up. On the other hand, [Mike] Mansfield would go on, and the guy would run out of questions, and he had all the time left, so—

Smith: Was Mike Mansfield still Majority Leader when you came to the Senate?

Dole 6-22-07—p. 17

Dole: Yes. I think he's the longest-serving Majority Leader; I think Tom Daschle is second.

Smith: Really?

Dole: Yes.

Smith: Did you get to know Mansfield?

Dole: Yes, I liked him. I thought he was a great guy. Very decent, fair. You know, he made partisan speeches now and then, but I thought he treated all of us—and, of course, as I remember the numbers, they could treat--be pretty nice to us. We weren't going to bother anybody. What did we have? Thirty-eight or something like that.

Smith: Yes.

Dole: We weren't much of a threat, except they needed us on civil rights, stuff like that.

Smith: You know, that brings up the larger question, the difference in the rules between the House and the Senate. Was it frustrating? I mean, people talk about being frustrated in the Senate because it's almost constructed to prevent action from taking place.

Dole: Oh, yes. Look, if you're the Leader, you can load up what they call the trees, and nobody can offer any amendments. You know, you can do anything, adjourn the Senate, recess the Senate, put in a quorum call and leave town, and nobody's ever going to get to call it off. Somebody will object. So, if you're the Leader, you've got a lot of power in the Senate, probably more than—I don't know. The Speaker has probably got a lot of power.

Smith: But for a freshman senator coming from the House, was it frustrating?

Dole 6-22-07—p. 18

Dole: Oh, yes. It took me a long time to catch on, and even when I was the Leader, I used to go to Robert [C.] Byrd and ask him questions about something that I was going to maybe use against him, and he was very honest about it. You know, “You can’t do that,” or, “Maybe that might work.” He wasn’t trying to help me, enable me, but at least he would help me. But I relied a lot on the parliamentarian, too, and, of course, when they’re in control, they appoint the parliamentarians; so you know that as nice as a person may be, he got there because some Democrat appointed him, or some Republican.

Smith: Your friendship with McGovern. Now, were you friends in ’72? I mean, you were obviously saying some harsh things about his presidential candidacy. I think I remember you saying once—stuff would come down from the White House, especially from [Charles W.] Colson’s shop.

Dole: Good old Chuckie, yes.

Smith: Tell me about that.

Dole: I remember one occasion; I think I was going to Baltimore to speak, and had a personal attack on Mrs. [Katherine] Graham, the *Washington Post*. They sent the speech up, you know, at four o’clock, and you’re getting in your car at five o’clock, and you’re not supposed to even read it until you get there, and then you read it. And I refused to do it. I said, “I’m not going to do this. Who told you all this stuff? I don’t know this as a fact, so I’m not going to do it.”

“Well, you’re,” blub, blub, blub, blub, blub. “You’re the Republican chairman,” dah, dah, dah. But, you know, they were pretty—sometimes they had some good ideas. You know, I was partisan, but I wasn’t crazy, and the *Washington Post* obviously was not on our side on it. They were even more liberal—a little more moderate paper now. But, yes, Chuck had some zingers. I can’t remember—he had some help, too, but if you didn’t watch it, they’d stick something in your speeches. It sort of paid to read them over once before you gave them.

Smith: Do you remember how you found out about Watergate?

Dole: Let's see. What was the break-in date?

Smith: June 17th of '72.

Dole: Well, I'm trying to think where I was.

Smith: We were talking to Pat Buchanan. I was talking to Pat Buchanan in another context last week, and I asked him—I should have known. I said, "Do you remember where you were when you read about it?"

He said, "Oh, I didn't read about it." He said, "I got a phone call about it the day after it happened."

I said, "Really?"

He said, "Oh yeah." He said, "We were routinely receiving photostats of stuff from the [Edward] Muskie campaign." And he said, "The minute I heard it, I figured it had to be our guys." You know, no doubt at all.

Dole: Yes. I couldn't swear I got a phone call or read it or heard it on the news, or something. But initially it was just, you know, it wasn't a big story until it started unfolding, and I never have understood why they did it. There wasn't any reason that I could think of.

Smith: Buchanan's explanation, which is, you know, interesting. You know, Nixon would say all these off-the-wall things.

Dole: Yes.

Smith: "Get this guy. I want a [unclear]," and the people who really looked out for his interests would not do it, or the next day go back and he would not want to do it.

Buchanan's theory is, someone heard it and went out and did it without bothering to check, and they saluted and went out and did it. But as the party chairman, I mean, you were put on the spot.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 20

Dole: Oh, yes. Fortunately they had this CREEP organization, Committee to Reelect the President. CREEP seems like a good name for it. And who was chairman of that?

Smith: Well, of course, [John] Mitchell was there for—

Dole: Mitchell was there. I think the titular head was a congressman from Minnesota. McGregor?

Smith: Clark McGregor.

Dole: McGregor, Clark, very bright guy. I remember we ran against each other for chairman of the freshman class, and I beat him by a couple of votes, which he never forgot. But being the chairman, obviously you were not going to be overlooked. And when they had the investigation, and I remember *Kansas City Star* reporter, Joe Laslik [phonetic], asking me, “I’ve got to ask you this question that’s being raised by a lot of Democrats. You live so close to the break-in. There’s some rumor that the burglary tools were hidden in your apartment.” That’s how bad it was. I’ve since turned that into a joke, saying, “That was my night off. I was on a job in Chicago.” You know, that kind of thing, to pass it off.

Smith: Did Woodward or Bernstein ever call you?

Dole: No, and then Senator [Sam] Ervin made a finding in the committee report that totally absolved me and said, “No way was Senator Robert J. Dole involved in any of the planning,” dah, dah, dah, dah, which was very nice of him; which was true. I mean, you never know what you would have done had the president called and said, “Will you do something? It’s totally above board,” all that stuff. So I’m glad they didn’t call me. Let CREEP handle it.

Smith: ’72 is a bad year. ’72, your marriage ends; you’ve got the Watergate scandal mushrooming.

Dole: We didn't pay the price until '74, but—

Smith: What thanks do you get but being ushered out of the chairmanship?

Dole: Well, I get a chopper ride to Camp David with the then-attorney general from Arizona.

Smith: Kleindienst, Richard Kleindienst.

Dole: Richard Kleindienst, who was about to get the ax, too, and I remember having a nice visit with Nixon and thanking me for all of thousands of miles that I'd traveled for the party, and giving me a Camp David jacket and saying that, "I think it's time you kind of move on. You've got an election coming up, and you don't want to be hampered by all this party stuff," as he used to say, which I didn't have in mind, as I think that I tried to explain to him. I thought, "Well, I'd stay a while, have a little fun." I think Kleindienst was sacked about that same time.

Smith: Where did the Bush connection come in? They wanted you, or, who's they?

Dole: Well, you looked back on it, and it was all sort of a ploy, you know, "Let Bob Dole think he's really involved in selecting this new person," and, of course, Bush was trying to get something. He didn't like it where he was. He wanted to be number one somewhere, and I don't think he thought being chairman of the Party was any big prize. I haven't read what he said about that in his book. He was very nice, but obviously he was not surprised that he was—and he wasn't very excited, as I recall, which probably—think about it, he probably didn't want the job anyway. But at least he was numero uno.

Smith: Was he ambassador to the U.N. at that point?

Dole: Yes, but when you're chairman of the party, when your party has the White House, you're not chairman of much. You don't make any decisions, you know. You

don't speak for anybody except the White House. So your job is just keeping everybody together and driving around the country making speeches. I don't know what George Bush had in mind, but I can't think that was really what he had hoped for.

Smith: Did you ever discuss any of this with Nixon in later years? I mean, just didn't talk about unpleasant—

Dole: He pushed me out of the chopper. [laughter] I never really blamed Nixon; I always blamed somebody else down the line. I mean, I always thought—again, I said many times, a little thing, like Nixon would extend his left hand to me to shake hands, and if you told him privately, “I'd like to come down and maybe take five minutes of your time,” or something, he'd generally get it done. You wouldn't get it done if you talked to anybody else. I think he looked at me as a friend because I was sort of his chief defender on the Senate floor on Vietnam, and so I always blamed somebody else, either Haldeman or somebody. I probably didn't realize at the time that Ambassador Bush was looking for new challenges, and of course he had his eye on the prize, too. So, turned out, it was probably a pretty good move for him. I remember the morning we met at the RNC, and all of the committee men and women and chairmen were there. I said, “Here they come dragging the new chairman in now.” Of course, Bush comes up to the podium. We got along fine; I mean, it wasn't his fault. As it turned out, it was probably a good thing I left, because I had a tough race, and I didn't need much association with the Party once Watergate got pretty hot.

Smith: Did you know at that point, say the end of '72, that you were likely to have a tough race?

Dole: Yes, when [Dr.] Bill Roy announced, I knew it was going to be a tough race.

Smith: Tell us who Bill Roy is.

Dole: Bill Roy was a member of Congress then. He was a practicing physician in Topeka, very hard working, able. I wouldn't say a liberal Democrat, but, you know, right

Dole 6-22-07—p. 23

close to that. Of course, as I said, I had been chairman of the Party, and then Watergate was heating up in the ensuing years, and the divorce, and abortion became, for the first time, a national issue. I remember the *New York Times* covering our race and a lot of national attention on abortion, and some of the pro-life—it really wasn't pro life then; it was these sort of crazies who went around with fetuses in a jar and, "Save babies; vote for Dole. Kill babies; vote for Roy." I mean, terrible stuff. I don't know how that played in Kansas, but it was just over the top and accused him of doing abortions, performing abortions, and maybe he had. I don't know. But you add it all up.

Smith: How much of an issue was the divorce? Was it the kind of thing people whispered about?

Dole: Probably. I don't recall it ever being a big, big issue, but, again, you consider it a failing. You know, something happened in your life that didn't—and you've got to accept responsibility for it.

Smith: Actually, it's in January of '73, ironically, it's the day Lyndon Johnson died, the twenty-second of January that the Supreme Court rules in the *Roe v. Wade*, so, literally, even as Watergate is exploding, there's this whole new kind of unstable element introduced into the political discussion. Were you comfortable talking about abortion as an issue? My sense is that—and I've talked about this with President Ford—there's a kind of Midwestern reticence, a kind of a privacy factor, that—

Dole: Well, I think Kansas has one of the most liberal abortion laws now in the country, but we had those rigid, zealous people, and I never even—when did abortion become an issue? It wasn't an issue when Nixon ran for president.

Smith: No. Once the Court—so, early '73.

Dole: So we became sort of the test case, and whether we wanted it or not, that's what we got to talk about. The *New York Times* didn't come out to cover the price of wheat; they saw this as a big—a doctor who's in that business, and somebody else, so—

Smith: Now, you were behind in that race.

Dole: Oh, I was behind. In fact, I told my parents the night before, I said, “I don’t think we can—I’m prepared to lose. I don’t think it’s going to happen. I don’t see how I can win, there’s just too much out there.” And we didn’t win by much, fifteen thousand votes, and I think that farmers sort of saved me in western Kansas.

Smith: Because obviously you had Nixon’s resignation and then the brief Ford honeymoon and then, of course, the pardon. And what did that do?

Dole: That was just another anchor. You already had several. How many anchors does it take to stop a ship? I don’t know.

Smith: Didn’t you fire your media team at one point? There was a shake-up that took place at the campaign.

Dole: Yes, I think Huck Boyd sort of took charge late in the campaign, a good friend, former state chairman, all that. And who—can’t remember who was—

Smith: As I recall, it was the first campaign where you actually hired outside professionals, media, commercial producers, that sort of thing, and there was a famous ad.

Dole: The mud ad?

Smith: Yes.

Dole: Won an award for it, too. Yes.

Smith: Tell me about that.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 25

Dole: It was a great ad. I mean, it might have saved my bacon. Dave Owen was involved in that campaign, too. He did a good job. I think he really got active late in the campaign when everybody thought it was going south. I think he and Huck got together and said, "Wait a minute." I remember meeting in a motel in Johnson County when the polls showed us four or five points behind or something. And I can't—who the manager was. Probably me, would be my guess. [laughter] I was probably managing my own campaign; that's probably part of it.

Smith: I think it was a Boston ad firm that did the—

Dole: It was.

Smith: But what was the background? What was the ad, and why did you need the ad?

Dole: Well, this image of Senator Bob Dole was pretty badly tarnished personally and then in all the other things that happened politically, whether it was Vietnam or Nixon or the pardon or whatever. They sort of kept piling up. I think even the farm prices were low. It didn't rain, so they blamed that on me. So we had to sort of reestablish that a lot of these things that were said were untrue, so somebody did a lot of good work and did a lot of research. They would just take them on, one, two, three; I think there were about seven different things, show the mud, and then this would be—well, you remember the ad. You end up with a clean slate.

Smith: And there was an image of you, and basically this litany of alleged failures would be accompanied by mud being hurled at the screen.

Dole: But then I ended up with a clean face. Apparently, it not only won an award, I think it caught the attention of a lot of Kansans who probably may have been drifting away or were undecided or—but you learn a lot from a close race like that. I mean, it taught me a lesson to start doing more at home, because I was doing a lot of traveling, chairman of the Party, all over the country. We still had good constituent work and we still tried to see everybody who came in from Kansas, but, you know, in our little state,

Dole 6-22-07—p. 26

people like to see you around other than the night before the election or the week or the month, just walking up and down the street. You don't have to make any speech.

Smith: I assume that must have been the most expensive campaign you'd ever waged up until that time, in '74.

Dole: Oh, yes. I don't know what we spent, but probably all we could raise. I remember we had a deficit, but once you win, you can always pay off the deficit. Now my first race cost \$19,000 for the House, which was a lot of money.

Smith: Now, to this day, there's still controversy over the—you had one debate with Roy. Was it at the end of the campaign?

Dole: Yes, I think it was Hutchinson, Kansas, fairgrounds, I remember. It got to be pretty nasty, too.

Smith: Was there anything in that debate that you wish you hadn't said or—

Dole: Yes, I think it was about abortion. I don't remember, but it didn't do me any good; the debate didn't do me any good. It didn't help me any, and we had our die-hards and he had his die-hards, and then we had the media, which was sort of split. People were just beginning to grapple with that issue. There weren't legions of people who would have called themselves pro-life or legions of people who would have called themselves pro-choice. They were in the formative stages. So, instead of highlighting it, I should have dropped it, you know. But we were both pretty testy. You know, Roy can be pretty testy himself.

Smith: Did President Ford campaign for you that fall?

Dole: Let's see.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 27

Smith: I think you said at one point you were quoted as saying that, “The best thing he could do is fly over.”

Dole: Nixon, yes. “The best thing Nixon could do is fly over. Don’t stop; don’t land anywhere.” [laughter] What’s that? “Evil, hear no evil, see no evil and evil.” But I don’t think Ford was—

Smith: Was the pardon a real deadweight?

Dole: Yes, then it was. It’s like, you know, what was it? Twenty-eighty; now it’s eighty-twenty. So, history judges some of those things, and, boy, when you thought everything else had fallen on you, then you get the H-bomb.

Smith: He did sort of make that up, though, two years later, didn’t he, for you?

Dole: Yes. Oh, yes.

Smith: Let’s just try to get to that point, then we’ll wrap up today. In terms of ’74, election night, what do you remember?

Dole: Well, I remember being holed up in a motel room for, I don’t know, quite a while because, you know, we were very close. It was going sort of back and forth, and we were ahead and we were behind. We knew—at least I knew at that point, if I was going to win depended on what happened in Goodland, Kansas, and Atwood and Dodge City and, to some extent, Johnson County, which is a Republican stronghold. I knew in Topeka and Wichita and others I’d be in trouble. As I remember, I was ready to say, “It’s not going to happen.” But then around ten or eleven o’clock, we had a few votes ahead, then a few more and a few more, and when was it fifteen thousand, four hundred and some? So that was sort of a resurrection back from the political ash heap.

Smith: Do you remember when he conceded?

Dole 6-22-07—p. 28

Dole: I'm not sure he ever has conceded. [laughter] I don't remember a phone call. But we've since had conversations, and he has attended a few of the things at the Dole Institute. His son's been active in politics. But he didn't want to lose, and I think he thought he had it, and something happened.

Smith: So you go back for a second term, and there must have been, by then, a strain within the party. [Ronald] Reagan hadn't announced, but clearly there was talk about a Reagan campaign. What was going on within the Kansas Republican Party in '75, early '76?

Dole: They were hoping Reagan would get in the race. For some reason, Ford wasn't a clear favorite; he didn't light a fire under very many people. But I signed on, I don't know when, to go around the country and go to Missouri and Kansas and other states and talk to delegates. I think Bob Griffin was with me. So we got into it fairly early, and I don't know how many states we did, but I think Ford appreciated that.

Smith: Tell us about Gerald Ford. You knew him uniquely and worked—

Dole: Yes. I remember him as somebody who you personally fairly quickly had a relationship with; you liked him. He was a good guy, a decent guy. He wasn't one of these hot shots, big shots who wanted to lord it over you as a freshman congressman, not that I had all that much contact with him the first couple of years. You sort of pick out people, whatever you do in life, and say, "Well, I kind of like what that person is doing. Maybe I'll keep an eye on him," or her. So I kind of liked what Ford was doing, and he was so smart when it came to defense matters because he was ranking Republican on Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, and he knew the stuff backwards and forward, plus he had this great camaraderie on the other side of the aisle. People liked Gerry Ford, and so then when he decided to run against [Rep. Charles] Halleck, there were three of us from Kansas who decided we'd vote for Ford. And what did he win by? Three votes?

Smith: Yes, that was 1965, right after the Goldwater debacle.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 29

Dole: Yes, that was another great—and Ford, of course, I think, appreciated that. He couldn't do a lot for you because we were in the minority, but I just thought he was, as I've said many times, a good, decent person that you'd like to have as your neighbor and sit down and talk with.

Smith: Do you think there's a little bit of the Midwesterner, too? There is a distinct kind of Midwestern value system, and—

Dole: Yes, I think so, even though he was upper Midwest, but yes. [laughter] But he was pure enough.

Smith: Do you think he took a bum wrap on that whole question of intelligence?

Dole: On the what?

Smith: The whole issue of intelligence, you know. Do you think he took a bum wrap?

Dole: Oh, yes. No question about it. In fact, I remember we went out and made speeches about how he was what, he's number three at Yale or whatever it was, and all-American football player, and all these things he had done. The old line, "He couldn't walk and chew gum at the same time." He fell a time or two, once getting off the plane, right, slipped?

Smith: Yes.

Dole: So that all played into it, but when you'd listen to him on the Senate [?] floor explain some complicated Defense Appropriation bill, not that many people had a chance often to do that, but you understood pretty quickly this guy, he not only knew what time it was; he knew how the clock was made.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 30

Smith: Don't you think there's a bias that, first of all, people think that because Midwesterners speak slowly, that they think slowly? And secondly, if you're not facile or, quote, eloquent, even if you buy the eloquence, that's how opinion makers—

Dole: But he was a Yalie. I mean, you talk about, you know, he was from the right school. As I remember in the House, I don't remember any press people jumping on Gerald Ford. It's only when you get up the ladder a ways. When you're in the minority, even though you may be the Republican Leader, well, you're not going to cause much harm and create many waves. But they had the Ev and Gerry show for a while.

Smith: Oh, yes. Ev and Gerry?

Dole: It used to be Ev and Charlie, and then it was Ev and Gerry. Just try to get a little press. I mean, you know Republicans, just to get your name in the paper, and the Party's name, almost had to buy an ad. So they would have these little—I think it was on a Saturday, or Friday, not Saturday; or maybe it was during the week because Friday would not be a good day to get any press. I knew other people from Michigan, [Elford] Cederberg and [Robert] Griffin and others who were close to Ford, and they were all good guys; and they all thought a lot of him. Was he the dean of the Michigan delegation?

Smith: I think he probably was.

Dole: Either he or Cederberg.

Smith: Yes. The vice presidency. Now, you saw Nelson Rockefeller, who was a pretty unhappy vice president. Were you there—remember there was this famous incident where I think he was called to task, maybe by Senator Byrd, for some ruling about—it had something to do with cloture, and eventually, actually, they reduced the cloture from two-thirds to sixty. But somehow Rockefeller was trying to involve himself in the debate on the floor, or something, and—

Dole 6-22-07—p. 31

Dole: Yes, I do remember that. Yes.

Smith: Or didn't recognize someone. I think maybe Jim Allen from Alabama was involved.

Dole: Yes, I do remember.

Smith: Did you have any contact with him when he was vice president?

Dole: Oh, I used to go up and say hello when he was presiding or go into the back little room there and say hello. I remember once he invited me out to his house for breakfast, as I remember, two or three of us, sort of junior members.

Smith: Was that the place out on Foxhall Road?

Dole: Yes. I can't remember what we talked about. I can't even remember what we had for breakfast, but—

Smith: [laughs] I'd be impressed if you did.

Dole: Yes. It was probably pretty good stuff. Eggs Rockefeller. [laughter]

Smith: He was not happy as vice president.

Dole: No.

Smith: That was no secret?

Dole: Yes, but I don't think he was happy about being kicked out either. I mean, he had obviously wanted to be President of the United States, and, as I said, if he'd have done that finger thing earlier, he might have been president.

Dole 6-22-07—p. 32

Smith: That's right. In fact, that's perfect on which to end today. Tell us about that.

Dole: Where was that, Binghamton?

Smith: Yes, it was Binghamton, New York, in the '76 campaign. You were running for vice president, and he was—

Dole: Well, we were up there, and he was—Elizabeth and I were there. I remember being on the plane with him, remember talking to Joe Canzeri, who was sort of his right-hand guy, a nice guy, and Nelson really wanted to help me. I mean, he may have been very bitter about the whole thing, but he didn't hold it against me. I remember him telling me, "Never read today's papers." He said, "If you read today's papers, you'll spend all day reacting. Let somebody else read the papers, and if there's something really important—so read today's papers tomorrow." So I thought it made a lot of sense, because politicians have a habit of picking up the paper, and if they see something, go out and pound somebody or put a bill in, or whatever, without much thought.

But in Binghamton, I think he was just getting kind of warmed up and saying a few words and was going to introduce me. There were some hecklers, people in the—I don't remember even what they were saying anymore, and then that's when he gave the famous sign.

Smith: One-finger salute.

Dole: Yes. I think he said something, too. Anyway, he got the message, and he got a lot of applause.

[End of interview]

Index

abortion

as a new national issue, 23

Allen, James, 31

Allott, Gordon, 8

Ames, Jordan, 5

Andreas, Dwayne, 16

Archer Daniels Midland, 16

Baker, Howard, 8

Biden, Joseph, 16

Boschwitz, Rudy, 4

Boyd, McDill (Huck), 24, 25

Brooke, Edward, 9

Buchanan, Pat, 19

Burke, Sheila, 2, 4

Bush, George H.W., 13, 21, 22

Byrd, Robert C., 18, 30

Canzeri, Joseph, 32

Carlson, Carlson, 8

Cederberg, Elford, 30

Coe, Jo-Anne L., 3

Coleman, Norm, 10

Colson, Charles, 18

Colson, Charles W., 18

Committee to Reelect the President (CREEP), 20

Curtis, Carl, 8

Daschle, Tom, 17

Dirksen, Everett, 7

Dole, Elizabeth, 4

Dole, Robert J.

1974 campaign, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28

as chairman of Republican National Committee, 10, 12

as freshman senator, 6, 18

effect of divorce, 23

first Senate speech, 6

on becoming chairman of the Republican National Committee, 13

on being absolved of any connections to Watergate, 20

on being independent, 5

on Bruce Kehrli, 10

on Bryce Harlow, 13

on chairmanship of Republican National Committee, 21

on Charles W. Colson, 18

on Clark McGregor, 20

- on constituent services, 2
- on Dave Owen, 25
- on Dean Evans, 5
- on Dr. Bill Roy, 22, 26, 28
- on efforts to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, 15
- on Elizabeth Dole, 4
- on Everett Dirksen, 7
- on fundraising, 4
- on George H.W. Bush, 13, 21
- on Gerald Ford, 28, 29, 30
- on H.R. Haldeman, 10
- on his ill-fated visit to Camp David, 21
- on House of Representatives, 17
- on Hubert H. Humphrey, 16
- on Hugh Scott, 12
- on J. William Fulbright, 15
- on Jacob Javits, 9
- on James Carlson, 8
- on James O. Eastland, 8
- on Jo-Anne L. Coe, 3
- on John Ehrlichman, 10
- on John Stennis, 8
- on Jordan Ames, 5
- on Joseph Biden, 16
- on Julie Nixon, 14
- on Kevin Phillips, 14
- on Lyn Nofziger, 7
- on Majority Leader of the Senate, 17
- on Margaret Chase Smith, 9
- on McDill (Huck) Boyd, 24
- on Mike Mansfield, 16, 17
- on Nelson Rockefeller, 31, 32
- on Patricia Nixon, 14
- on relations with the Nixon White House, 7, 18
- on Richard M. Nixon, 10, 14, 21, 22
- on Robert C. Byrd, 18
- on Roman Hruska, 7
- on Sheila Burke, 4
- on staff, 2, 4
- on the Nixon pardon, 27
- on Trent Lott, 8
- on U.S. Senate, 6, 17
- on Vietnam War, 7
- on Watergate, 10, 19, 20, 22
- regrets regarding 1974 campaign, 26

Eastland, James O., 8
Ehrlichman, John, 10

Dole 6-22-07—p. 35

Emerging Republican Majority, The (by Kevin Phillips), 13
Environmental Protection Agency, 14
Ervin, Sam, 20
Ev and Charlie show, 30
Ev and Gerry show, 30
Evans, Dean, 5

Ford, Gerald, 11, 28, 29, 30
Fulbright, J. William, 15

Goldwater, Barry, 9
Graham, Katherine, 18
Griffin, Robert, 28, 30

Haldeman, H.R., 10, 22
Halleck, Charles, 28
Hanson, Clifford, 8
Harlow, Bryce, 13
Hayakawa, S.I., 11
Hruska, Roman, 7
Humphrey, Hubert H., 16
 and Lyndon B. Johnson, 16

Issues and Answers, 16

Javits, Jacob, 9
Johnson, Lyndon B., 15
 and Hubert H. Humphrey, 16

Kansas City Star, 20
Kehrli, Bruce, 10
Kleindienst, Richard, 21
Komarek, Ruth Ann, 3

Laslik, Joe, 20
Lott, Trent, 8

Mansfield, Mike, 16, 17
McGovern, George, 16
McGregor, Clark, 20
Mitchell, John, 20
Morton, Rogers, 12
Muskie, Edmund, 19

New York Times, 23
Nixon, Julie, 14
Nixon, Patricia, 14
Nixon, Richard M., 10, 13, 14, 21, 22, 27

Dole 6-22-07—p. 36

Nofziger, Lyn, 7

Owen, Dave, 25

Phillips, Kevin, 13

Reagan, Ronald, 28

Rockefeller, Nelson, 30, 31, 32

Roe v. Wade, 23

Roy, Dr. Bill, 22, 26

Saxbe, William, 12

Scott, Hugh, 12

Sea View Hotel (Bal Harbour, Fla.), 16

Sebelius, Keith, 5

Smith, [Congressman] _____, 8

Smith, Margaret Chase, 9

Specter, Arlen, 10

Stennis, John, 8

Stewart, Jimmy, 9

Tower, John, 12

Washington Post, 18

Welfare reform, 14