

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE TRIBUTE TO SENATOR FRANK CARLSON

"Frank Carlson was as much a part of the Kansas landscape as sunflowers and cottonwood trees. But he was even more than that. Frank Carlson was the American Dream come to life. He was the son of Swedish immigrants who settled in Cloud County a century ago, and his life spanned nearly half the history of his adopted homeland.

"He was also that rarest breed of political animal: one who, by refusing to court either power or popularity, guaranteed himself of both.

"The story is an authentic Kansas legend, of how four local businessmen approached Frank in a Concordia wheat field back in the spring of 1928. They were looking for a candidate for the state legislature. Frank said they were looking in the wrong place. He would be much too busy shucking corn for cattlefeed to spend three months in Topeka.

"'Don't worry', one of his visitors replied, 'you won't win anyway!'

"The voters disagreed. In November, 1928, they launched the reluctant candidate on a trajectory that would take him from the legislature in Topeka to the governor's mansion and on to both houses of Congress. Along the way, Frank earned a reputation as a roadbuilder - and a groundbreaker. His initiatives in workmen's compensation, education, and medicine have enriched the lives of countless Kansans.

"But it was his personal example - and above all, the example of his personality - which will be cherished for as long as Americans reserve a place in their public life for men and women of decency, compassion and honor. As a freshman United States Senator, Frank played a leading role in drafting another Kansan, Dwight Eisenhower, for the presidency in 1952. Soon after assuming office, Ike voiced a familiar presidential lament.

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"'Frank', he said, 'this is the loneliest house I've ever been in. What can I do?'

"Carlson responded by inviting the new president to meet with a small senatorial prayer group. In 1953 Eisenhower attended the National Prayer Breakfast which Carlson had helped initiate. Presidents ever since have followed in his footsteps.

"It's no exaggeration to say that I would not be in the Senate today if it weren't for Frank Carlson. In January, 1968, the man who 40 years earlier declared his preference for farming, bowed out of politics with typical grace. Then he went home to Concordia, to the land he loved, and the family he loved most of all. He lived on to witness a new generation of Kansans reap the harvest which he had planted during a long and rich career.

"On a day like this, I feel like I have lost more than a friend - I have lost a mentor and role model. We have all lost an embodiment of politics at its best, a source of inspiration, counsel, and irreplaceable perspective. Frank Carlson held many offices during his lifetime. But a man is not a resume. He is not bills introduced or bills signed. He is flesh and blood, spirit and soul. He is a warm heart, a keen eye, a chuckle in the throat and the knowledge that in a democracy, no man is better than his neighbor.

"Frank Carlson was every Kansan's neighbor. Today, all Kansas is feeling the sadness of farewell, for we have lost a great man. The years will be lonely without him."