



Senator Bob Dole & 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Title: One Person's Journey toward Equality for Those with Disabilities: Moving from the Personal to Global.

Description: These instructional materials include background on Senator Bob Dole's life prior to and after his injury in WWII, which set the foundation for his later life as a public servant.

Grade level: Middle and High School

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Senator Bob Dole & 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

One Person's Journey toward Equality for Those with Disabilities: Moving from Personal to Global

Overview: Learning about Senator Bob Dole's nearly lifelong effort first to adapt to a physical disability and then to encourage the public to recognize the importance of providing an equal opportunity to all those with disabilities both humanizes and highlights bipartisanship and public service. Dole's initial public service was as a member of the U.S. armed forces during World War II, where he sustained injuries that left him with limited use of his right arm and hand. In 1950, he was elected to a term in the Kansas House of Representatives. Upon finishing law school and being admitted to the bar in 1952, he became county attorney of Russell County, Kansas for eight years. Eight years later, in 1960, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until elected to the U.S. Senate in 1968. He resigned from his Senate seat in 1996 to run as the Republican Party's candidate for president. While he was not elected president, he has continued to remain active in public service as he advocated for matters such as the Food for Peace program with Senator McGovern, and for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While Dole's record of 70 years of public service obviously is impressive, who is the person that inhabited these public roles for all this time? What might have influenced him to chart this path in his life, and how might his thinking and the choices he made prove helpful for young people? The purpose of this material is offer students insight into Senator Dole via his personal correspondence and his memoir, *One Soldier's Story* (2005), and to place his thinking into a historical context, as well as in the context of recurring public concerns such as ensuring equal opportunity for those with disabilities. Students can explore these questions as they use excerpts of his personal correspondence and his memoir as they follow the outline below.

- I. Setting a personal & historical context – who was Bob Dole as a young person?
 - A. Life in Russell Kansas during Great Depression
 - B. Dole begins adult life at KU in 1941 – letters
 - C. U.S. entry into war and Dole seeks to join army
 - D. Transition point – last letter to parents written with right hand

- II. Confronting disability – militarily and physically what happened to change him?
 - A. Dole gets wounded – correspondence with parents
 - B. Recovery
 - C. Changes wrought by injuries – life before and after

- III. Acting on those changes – who did he become?
 - A. Personal life
 - B. Political life
 - C. National life

Excerpts from *One Soldier's Story* for Part I

Overview of Part I: This part will give a brief introduction to Bob Dole prior to his war injury, an injury that resulted in a life-changing disability and helped to shape his adult life.

I.A. Background on his early life in Russell, Kansas prior to entering the University of Kansas.

“I was six years old when the stock market crashed, ushering in the Great Depression that devastated an entire generation of Americans. ...in Kansas a severe drought made parched land even more vulnerable to the wicked winds that howled across the region. For most of my youth, it seemed rainfall could be measured by the thimblefuls. Russell sat right in the center of the ‘dust bowl,’ and the topsoil of many of the farms literally turned to powder and blew away, taking with it the hopes and dreams of some of Kansas’s most hardworking families” (p. 49).

“By the mid 1930’s things got so bad that Mom and Dad...moved into the concrete-floored basement of our house and rented out the upstairs to some oil people... Dad installed a bathroom...and a stove so Mom could cook. We lived in the basement for several years. ...everyone in the family worked. I delivered newspapers, mowed lawns when there was grass to be cut, raked leaves, shoveled snow...” (p. 51).

“Located...on Main Street, Dawson’s was the gathering place of Russell. Sooner or later, everyone in Russell came through the doors of the old-fashioned drugstore...to have prescriptions filled, others came for coffee and conversation, and many came for the candy, sodas and ice cream. ...All day long, you could find older men holding court at Dawson’s, sitting at the wooden tables under the ceiling fans, engaged in lively banter.... At night, after the movie show let out at the Dream Theater...or the Mecca, our other theater in Russell... moviegoers ambled on over to Dawson’s to top off their evening with a bit of sweetness. ...Dawson’s was the place to meet” (pp. 54-55).

“I was a three-sport letterman at Russell. When the hot August winds started blowing, I...went out to football practice. ...But basketball was my first love.” (pp. 56-57) “Near the close of my senior year, the members of the Russell High Girls Reserve voted me as their ‘Ideal Boy’” (p. 59).

“I developed a plan: somehow I was going to earn enough money to attend college. I’d go on to med school...become one of those doctors who didn’t have to worry about which way the wind blew or how much rain we were likely to get...college held the key to future success” (pp. 59-60).

Conversation with Bub Dawson, a friend in Russell:

Dawson: “Why in the world would you want to go to KU? Snob Hill, of all places?”

Dole: “I know, Bub. I know. But’s it’s my best chance. You know I got that letter from Phog Allen. He seems to think that I can make the basketball team” (p. 61).

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier's story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

Discussion questions:

- *What are some similarities between Dole’s teen years and yours?*
- *How did growing up during the Great Depression impact Dole’s life?*

I.B. Letters written as freshman at KU. The first offers insight into life as a college freshman, and the second illustrated his response to the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Background information: As a college freshman, Dole often wrote his mother to explain his money and laundry situation. He paid to have his laundry done or sent it home because there were no Laundromats. This is an example of the types of notes he would send home during his first semester at KU in 1941.

Dear Mom:

I hated to send all this laundry home but it costs too much down here, shirts are 15¢, shorts and short-shirts are 6¢ towels 5¢ and washrags 2¢, socks 3¢ and that adds up pretty fast when you have as little money as I have... I have to pay \$50.00 for fees this afternoon I've spent about \$12 for books and I still need a german book that will cost \$2.50. Altogether I've spent about \$70 which leaves me only \$35.00 left in the bank. Cleaning is high here too, pants are .50¢ and suits are \$.65....

Sometime within the next month or two when you're not so busy send me some cookies or something.

I'm also sending a list of the freshman rules, so that you won't have to worry about me.

Love,
Bob

Letter from Bob Dole to Bina Dole. Late September 1941. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dept.ku.edu/~dolearch/collections/wwii_letters/files/c026_001_000_002.pdf

Discussion questions:

- *How would you compare 1941 prices with those of today? (You might go online to Amazon and find the price of a textbook for an introductory course in biology, German, math, U.S. history and psychology.)*
- *How do you think the life of a freshman is alike and different from that of today?*

Background information: Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Dole wrote this letter to his parents.

Dear Folks:

I suppose you, like every one else are huddled around the radio listening to war developments in the battle with Japan. All day yesterday boys in the house [fraternity] sat around their rooms waiting for news bulletins to come in. There are 3 or 4 boys who are considering enlisting this week in the Army Air Corp. It might be a good thing for me to do, at least it would be better than spending your money at school?

Letter from Bob Dole to Bina and Doran Dole, Mid-December 1941. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dept.ku.edu/~dolearch/collections/wwii_letters/files/c026_001_000_012.pdf

Follow-up information: After waiting a year to receive a draft notice, Dole enlisted in the Army Reserve Corps on December 14, 1942 at the age of nineteen. Later, after the end of his the spring semester of his sophomore year, he received a notice to report to Fort Leavenworth on June 1, 1943. He participated in 21 weeks of training. He applied for and was accepted to officer training school. Dole shipped out and landed at Naples in December 1944.

I.C. Letter written to his parents before his first military engagement

Background information: After learning of his assignment to the 10th Mountain Division, soldiers skilled at mountain fighting, Dole “thought it odd that a kid from Kansas who seen a mountain up close only once in his life would be assigned to lead a platoon of mountain troops. We Kansans didn’t ski much. But the army didn’t ask my opinion” (p. 10).

13 March 45

Dear Folks:

I hope you haven’t worried too much because you haven’t received any mail from me. I think it’s been about 2 weeks since I’ve written. I’ve really been keeping pretty busy. I’ve got a platoon of men to look out for...

I’m a combat soldier now folks. I suppose you’ve been reading about the 10th Mountain Division in the paper the last few weeks. We’ve really done some pretty good work so far....

...I’m sorry to hear about all the Russell boys being killed or wounded but I’m glad that you write and tell me anyway. I guess so many were meant to be killed in this war, there’s nothing either you or I can do but trust in God and I pray that he will look after us.

Letter from Bob Dole to Bina and Doran Dole, March 13, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dept.ku.edu/~dolearch/collections/wwii_letters/files/c026_003_000_082.pdf

Discussion questions:

- *Why would Dole’s parents tell him of other Russell residents being killed?*
- *Why would Dole want to know that other people from Russell had been killed?*
- *Why would the army put Dole as a leader of the Mountain division?*

I.D. One of last letters written with his right hand while on leave in Rome

7 April 45

Dear Mom and Dad,

What a life, I can hardly believe that I am living in such a wonderful place. My rest is about over but I’ve really enjoyed myself so far. I’m going on a tour this afternoon...

The radio is playing it reminds me of the times that I’ve been home playing Norma Jean’s records. So far I haven’t heard any records by Frank Sinatra. I guess he isn’t too popular over here.

The war news really sounds good. I guess Russia plans on helping us with Japan. Keep your eyes on the news for big things to happen.

...I ran onto a Lt. in Eugene’s camp only yesterday but still haven’t seen Eugene.

So bye for now

Love
Bob

Letter from Bob Dole to Bina and Doran Dole, April 7, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dept.ku.edu/~dolearch/collections/wwii_letters/files/c026_003_000_087.pdf

Excerpts of Primary Sources for Part II

Overview of Part II: On April 14, 1945, Dole was severely injured on a battlefield in Italy. Part II discusses the extent of Dole's injury and recovery, and begins to lay groundwork for Dole's future advocacy for people with disabilities.

II.A.1. Letter written to parents after his injury while in military hospital

Background information: At the time, Dole was encased in a half body cast that immobilized him from shoulders to hips due to injuries to a shoulder, both arms and hands and his spine.

At the time, Dole was unable to write letters to his loved ones. Dole dictated letters to his friend who transcribed letters for him. In his memoir, Dole recalled his friend writing this letter to his parents:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Just writing to let you know I'm feeling O.K. I can move my legs now, but I'm still having a little trouble with my left arm. I have a broken bone in my right arm and two in the shoulder. I guess some German thought I was a good target.

Write and let me know all the news. Tell me how Kenny is getting along in the Army. Tell everyone hello and to write. I'll let you hear from me as soon as possible. Please don't worry about me. I may be home for my birthday [July 22nd].

Love,
Bob (April 25, 1945)

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier's story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. p. 158.]

Discussion questions:

- *How did Dole cope with his injuries?*
- *How serious were his injuries in comparison to how he described them to his parents?*

II.A.2 May 3 telegram to parents

Background information: Dole's parents received the April 25th letter before the War Department delivered this May 3rd telegram.

“The Secretary of War desires me to express his deep regret that your son 2LT Dole Robert J was seriously wounded in Italy 14 April 1945. Hospital sending you new address and further information. Unless such new address is received address mail to him “Rank Name serial number (hospitalized) 2628 Hospital Section APO 698 c/o Postmaster New York New York.”

JA Ulio The Adjutant General.

Letter from Adjutant General James Ulio to Doran Dole, May 3, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dept.ku.edu/~dolearch/collections/wwii_letters/files/c017_roll1_006_extract.pdf

Follow-up information about his surgery and brush with death: Dole was in a cast from his hips to his chin. He lay in bed with a strap under his chin to keep his head from moving and further harming his spinal column. He was partially paralyzed on both sides of his body. He was not able to control his bodily functions. On several occasions, he hovered near death. In July 1945, for example, he suffered an extremely high fever. The doctors gave him a new drug, penicillin, and packed him in ice. Once his fever decreased, they removed his right kidney.

Discussion questions:

- *How might these injuries impact Dole's life both personally and professionally?*
- *How might they impact his goal to become a doctor?*

II.B.1 Background information on medical care to set context for excerpt that follows

In November 1945, Dole went to Percy Jones Army Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, which specialized in treating wounded soldiers and rehabilitative work with disabled soldiers. In December 1945, a blood clot formed in a lung, which once again brought him close to death.

Excerpt of letter to Dole's father about downturn in Bob's medical condition

Dear Mr. Dole:

We regret to inform you that your son, Robert J. Dole... is seriously ill with Pulmonary infarction. At the present time it would appear that his recovery is somewhat questionable.

If it is your desire to visit him at this hospital, you may feel free to do so at any time. You may, however, rest assured that everything has been and is being done to bring about his speedy recovery.

Very truly yours,
Robert E. Reker
2d Lt, MAC
Adjutant

Letter from Adjutant Robert Reker to Doran Dole, December 27, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dept.ku.edu/~dolearch/collections/wwii_letters/files/dole_bio_b1f2.pdf

Follow-up information for the above excerpt

Dole's problems persisted into March 1946. He was treated with streptomycin as a test subject, which led to his recovery. Given his three-month illness, he had to restart rehabilitation. He still didn't have feeling in his arms or fingers, so he had to relearn how to walk without using his arms for balance or to help him stand up when he fell.

Discussion questions:

- *What would you be thinking or feeling if you were experiencing these setbacks?*

IIC.1. First visit back to home, September 12, 1945

Background information: His recovery was painful and slow. By September he only could walk a few steps at a time, could barely move his left hand, could not use his right arm nor bathe himself, and still was in a half body cast. He was permitted, however, to make a short trip home.

First hand testimony of his arrival to and time at his home in Russell.

“I was concerned about getting into the house. ...I was like a sack of potatoes, dead weight in the backseat. It took forever to slide me out of the vehicle and onto the stretcher. Then Dad, Mom, and Norma Jean carried me up the steps and inside the house” (pp. 187-188).

“I wouldn’t have wanted anyone but family to see me right now [because of] my inability to do anything.... I had been a big, strong kid in Russell when I’d gone away...I had been a leader on the football, basketball, and track teams. Now I was a 122-pound weakling who had to be carried into the house, helped into the bathroom, and fed like a baby” (p. 188).

...this was a new experience. Our family was accustomed to going, going, going. Mom and Dad didn’t raise us to sit around and do nothing. We were a family constantly involved in everything-sports, community events, work, or something. Now, somebody had to be home near me, twenty-four hours a day. It was like having a baby at home-an adult baby, without the sense of wonder or the joy of discovery that comes with a child’s first steps or first words” (p. 191).

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier’s story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

II.C.2. Growing personal & social awareness of those with a disability

Background information:

“By 1946...the American public was hungry for new automobiles, but before the new models started appearing in the showrooms, GM provided the first Buicks and Oldsmobiles off the assembly line to seriously wounded soldiers, and particularly to the amputees at Percy Jones Army Hospital. Each car was specifically equipped to compensate for the individual disability of each veteran. ...The disabled soldiers still had to pay for the vehicles” (p. 220).

Background information: Dole was conscious of how others noted his struggles once he returned home and struggled to walk outside (p. 226). At the same time, he was quite aware of how those at the time sought to make accommodations for him, such as when he returned to college in 1948.

First hand testimony of these experiences

“Poor Bob. He probably wishes the Germans had finished him off” (p. 231). [What Dole recalled overhearing one person say to a second person as he walked down a street in Russell.]

“Most of my professors allowed me to take my exams orally” (p. 262).

Follow-up information: When he returned to college, he recalled how many there sought to level the playing field for him. Even though Dole recorded the lectures, he took the recordings home to transcribe with his left hand, which was not his natural writing hand.

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier’s story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

Discussion questions:

- How could your school and community help you if you found yourself with a disability? Think through your daily tasks from the time you wake up in the morning until you lie down at night.

Excerpts of primary sources and quotes for Part III

Overview of Part III: After Dole’s injury and rehabilitation, he found himself forced to act on the disability that would stay with him forever. This part shows how he acted on that disability in different roles in his life.

III.A. Quote on how he integrated his physical disabilities into part of who he was

Dr. Kelikian “inspired within me a new attitude, a new way of looking at my life, urging me to focus on what I had left and what I could do with it, rather than complaining about what had been lost and could never be repaired” “[He] instilled confidence in me despite my limitations” (p. 244).

November, 1947 he started learning how to become a “leftie” (p. 245).

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier’s story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

III.B. Background on possible seeds sown for his later bipartisanship

Dole met Daniel Inouye while a patient at Percy. Inouye was wounded in Italy on April 21, 1945. Inouye, who lost his right arm, credits Dole with inspiring him to enter politics. When Inouye asked Dole what he planned to do, Inouye remembered Dole saying: “When I get out of here, I’m going to law school, become an attorney, run for the state legislature, and...I’m going to run for the U.S. Congress.” Year later, when describing his Senatorial career, Inouye said: “I followed the Dole plan, and I beat him!” (Inouye was elected to Congress prior to Dole.)

Dole also met Phil Hart at Percy, who later became lieutenant governor of Michigan and then was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1958 and served there until his death in 1976. Since then, one of the Senate Office buildings in Washington, D.C., called the Hart Building, has been named after Senator Hart, whom Dole first met as a fellow veteran while both were recovering from war injuries.

III.B. Dole’s quotes on importance of relationships established at Percy, his thoughts on bipartisanship, and interest in those with disabilities.

“Something about our World War II experiences and our time together at Percy Jones Hospital created a bond among us that no partisan politics could ever separate” (p. 218).

“Two qualities that I’ve learned through my war experience and the subsequent disabilities I’ve lived with for the past sixty years are patience and adaptability” (p. 273).

“Think how many of our country’s problems would vanish overnight if we could just get these words straight: The responsibility is mine and mine alone. In the final analysis, that’s what great leaders do, not just in the Senate but also in daily life. They face life without flinching.

They make the tough decisions. They live with the consequences whether good or bad. They make the most of what they have. That’s the kind of leader I have always tried to be” (p. 277).

When “asked what accomplishments I’m most proud of during my tenure in the Senate...I tell them that they...are not party or personal victories, but things like saving Social Security and passing the Americans with Disabilities Act. These were accomplished by working together closely with both Republican and Democratic friends” (p. 278).

“I know, too, there are people who, for reasons far beyond their control, need help. But I also know that the greatest social program in the world is a neighbor who cares about you” (p. 282).

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier’s story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

One Soldier’s Story: A Synthesis

Excerpt of first speech on U.S. Senate floor - Information: Dole Archives Project

My remarks today concern an exceptional, which I joined on another April 14, twenty-four years ago, during World War II. It is a group no one joins by choice. As a minority, it has always known exclusion, maybe not exclusion from the front of the bus, but perhaps even from climbing aboard it (1969, p. 278).

“I know, too, there are people who, for reasons far beyond their control, need help. But I also know that the greatest social program in the world is a neighbor who cares about you” (*One Soldier’s Story*, Bob Dole, 2005, p. 282).

[Dole, R.J. (2005). *One soldier’s story: A memoir*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

Background: As illustrated by the above excerpt, Dole succeeded in fulfilling his plan. After completing law school following World War II, Dole was elected to the Kansas legislature, served as a prosecuting attorney in Russell, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, and finally was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1968. The second excerpt came over 35 years later as he recounted his experience as a soldier during World War II and his recovery from the wounds suffered during a battle in Italy.

Task: During this class period, you have learned about Bob Dole before and after suffering a life-changing injury on an Italian battlefield during World War II. Now, you are tasked with capturing the breadth and depth of Dole and his experience in but several words. Imagine that you have to describe Bob Dole as a person and Dole’s thinking about physical disabilities in four words or phrases. You will need to explain each word or phrase and support with examples. Finally, you are to write a paragraph describing what he might be like as a politician.

A Testimonial Wall to Dole's Bipartisanship

Background: From the time he was called to duty in 1943 to his farewell tour of Kansas in 2014, Robert Dole lived a life of public service. After leaving the army in 1948, he served a term in the Kansas legislature (1951-53), four terms as prosecuting attorney for Russell County. In 1961, he started serving in the U.S. House of Representatives until he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served from 1969 to 1996. He resigned in 1996 to run as the Republican Party's presidential candidate. While he lost the election, he remained active in political affairs, such as his chairmanship of the National World War II Memorial campaign (1997-2004) and his 2012 testimony on the floor of the U.S. Senate in support of the passage of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

At a time when Republicans and Democrats are so ideologically divided, which is most acute among those actively engaged in politics (*Political Polarization in the American Public*, Pew Research Center, 2014), there are calls for a return to bipartisanship. During his time as Senator, Dole formed partnerships such as with Senators George McGovern and Tom Harkin that crossed this divide and resulted in achievements as the U.S. Food for Peace Program and the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a result, Dole's peers came to recognize both his bipartisanship on certain issues and what characterized him as an effective politician.

Task: Whereas the prior activity largely stopped at Dole's life upon entering the U.S. Senate, this activity provides an overview of one part of his political career from 1969 to the present. You are to review the Testimonial Wall to Dole's Bipartisanship at (<http://www.thinglink.com/scene/642819321617186817>). The Wall contains comments from politicians and other public figures that address one or more of the following about Dole: his efforts at bipartisanship; his personal characteristics that influenced who he was as a politician; and, his views on key public policy matters. As you read the testimonials, imagine that you had to create a single page biography based on this information, which you would place at the center of the Testimonial Wall on Thing Link.

References

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Letter from Bob Dole to Bina Dole. Late September 1941. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
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Letter from Adjutant General James Ulio to Doran Dole, May 3, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
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Letter from Adjutant Robert Reker to Doran Dole, December 27, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas
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<http://doleinstitute.org/about-bob-dole/a-legacy-of-leadership/disabilities/>

Citations for the Thing Link Activity

- Letter from President George Bush to Robert J. Dole, November 24 1990. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas.
https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://dolearchivecollections.ku.edu/collections/vip_letters/c020_002_000_043.pdf
- Photograph of Robert J. Dole in bed for recovery, Winter General Hospital in Topeka, KS, 1945. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas.
<http://dolearchivecollections.ku.edu/index.php?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=1543>
- Photograph of President Ronald Reagan and Robert J. Dole shaking hands at the Russell Long Dinner at the Madison Hotel, October 16, 1985. Dole Archives, Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas.
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