

**Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project**  
**Robert J. Dole**  
**Interviewed by**  
**Richard Norton Smith**  
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Smith: Some of this, obviously, is familiar territory, but hopefully some of it's new, too. You came to Congress in '61, from western Kansas. Had you met Gerald Ford before you took your seat in the House?

Dole: No. The only people I knew were our senators and I had met Phil Hart, of course. Anyway, no.

Smith: The Republican Party in the House in those days, one senses, was pretty different.

Dole: In the minority.

Smith: Was that the psychology?

Dole: Yeah. It was never going to change, so might as well do the best you can with 180 – I think we got to 180 once, didn't we? 170, 160.

Smith: And what does that do to the psychology of the minority?

Dole: Well, if you had any initiative and wanted to do something, I don't remember – I know among the big guys there was bipartisanship, but I'm not sure. I remember working with a few Democrats on issues. But you almost get the feeling, well, you're just a second class member and it's not going to change. It is a permanent minority. You get paid well, so maybe you'll stay here.

Smith: Does that encourage an exodus to the Senate, for example? Is that a factor?

Dole: Yeah, you go from one minority to the next. But in the Senate you have a lot more freedom, you can do about anything you want in the Senate, except get a bill with your name on it. That's not going to happen when the Democrats are in control, or vice versa.

Smith: But the party in those days, if you look at the Republican Party in the early Sixties, not just in the House – but it's a Midwest party. It's grounded in the

Midwest because you had very few Southerners at that point. That was about to change. But it was basically a Midwest party with obviously a few from the East and the West Coasts and all that.

Dole: We had one guy, Bruce Houser, from Texas. He was our Southern Bob, and that's about it. You're right. Texas qualifies for the South in a way, southwest.

Smith: What does that mean? I think of the Midwest as a place where...

Dole: That's where we started, in Wisconsin and you get the leadership, whether it's Dirksen or Halleck, or Gerald Ford. I'm trying to think who we had on the Eastern – Bob Wilson, he's from California. It was a Midwest-centered party.

Smith: Did that mean it was a more pragmatic party?

Dole: I think so, yeah. I thought Ford was pretty pragmatic. He didn't have any lists he kept on his conservative rating with the ACU. John Ashbrook – remember that name?

Smith: Yes.

Dole: I worked closely with Ashbrook on the American Conservative Union. And we used to meet monthly to put out our ratings for the month, and of course, since we were doing it, ours were always very good. We were the stars of the conservatives. But he was a very bright guy from Ohio, and for a long time the Conservative Union was pretty important with a lot of new members from around the country, and had a pretty good following with the media because it wasn't a nut cake organization. It was conservative.

Smith: It was also about ideas, it wasn't just tactics and name calling.

Dole: We just didn't look up their votes, aye, no, aye, no...and Ashbrook was a man of ideas, too. He was really a bright guy. He died at a very young age.

Smith: What kind of conservative was Jerry Ford?

Dole: In those days a conservative was one who believed in restraining spending, not choking anybody, but restraining and keeping taxes low. And that was it. There wasn't any Civil Rights, same sex marriage, abortion. That didn't happen until – Nixon escaped all that, too.

Smith: That's right. John Paul Stevens told us when he was nominated for the Court, no one asked him about abortion.

Dole: Yeah. When would that have been?

Smith: That's about the last time – it would be '75.

Dole: Yeah, that's about right. I think it became a big issue in '74- well, in my campaign. And the *New York Times* and all the big papers were out there because this was the first race where, according to the media, this was the issue. And it probably was. There were probably other issues, but this really brought people out on both sides. Six months ago I wrote a letter to Bill Roy. I'm getting too old for enemies, and I've been told that he felt that I did something with that issue that was unfair, and he wrote the nicest letter back saying he thought it was pretty rough and tumble and a lot of my people were over the top, but he never thought that I'd done anything. Because they carried these fetuses around in jars...kill babies, vote for Roy. Had little ads, one liners. It was awful stuff.

Smith: Did you have any idea at that point, because that really was a sort of turning point in the nature of American politics, and in some ways, in conservatism, too. It became much more a cultural conservatism, kind of a combustible mix between economics and the social issues.

Dole: I remember my first campaign, there were a lot of people who wanted federal aid for education. I opposed it. The one thing you get support for federal aid is farm subsidies, so these farmers didn't mind. They're the best, they've got their hand out all the time. And even the Farm Bureau, which was at one time a pretty middle of the road, conservative, not so worried about cows and wheat. They were worried about the country and broader issues.

I can't remember what they used to talk about on the *Ev and Charlie Show*, but it certainly wasn't any of these hot button issues.

Smith: That's perfect, because that brings up – in '61, I don't think he was in the House leadership. In '62 he took on Charlie...

Dole: Charlie Halleck.

Smith: No, first there was Charlie Hoeven.

Dole: Oh yeah, from Iowa.

Smith: That's right. And supposedly Hoeven said to Halleck, "You're next." Or something like that. Do you remember? The older I get, the more and more I think generational issues trump everything else, including ideology. In other words, your generation of Young Turks were at the point where you were dissatisfied with the elders who were running the party, defining the party in the House. People like Don Rumsfeld and others.

Dole: Charlie Goodell, at that time, and Mel Laird. Laird, he was the kind of guy who would put poison in the river and then run down to the town and ask what happened. That guy was tough.

Smith: A conniver.

Dole: Slick, devious.

Smith: Was he a candidate? Because there is some uncertainty until we get to the Halleck thing.

Dole: He was a good buddy of Ford's. No he was in the leadership. Wasn't he conference chairman or something?

Smith: Right.

Dole: He was a very bright guy, I mean, he was young, younger than Ford. He was smart. Came from Wisconsin. But he had this quality that you could never put your finger on it, but you knew he was behind it.

Smith: What was it about Charlie Halleck that made him vulnerable? This is after the Goldwater debacle.

Dole: I think Mel Laird may have put in a good word for me with Ford in '76. We weren't close friends but...Charlie Halleck was just a wonderful speaker. I think he had spoken at a convention and really wowed them. He could give a great speech, but he had this drinking problem. He didn't like to travel and that's about the time we saw – I think you meant Charlie Hoeven instead of Golden – he used to "Where are you going this weekend, Bob?" And I'd say,

“I’m going back to Kansas.” “Why in the hell do you guys go home every weekend? When I go home, it’s an event. We don’t run around every weekend.” And that’s about the time when all that started to change. If you didn’t go home every weekend, or if you missed a vote, little things – the old boys, once they’d get them, some of them went home, most of them just stayed here. It wasn’t quite as easy to get around.

Smith: You didn’t have jet planes.

Dole: They weren’t flying on corporate jets yet. They didn’t have their Gulf Streams ordered.

Smith: Was Halleck vulnerable in part because the Goldwater thing was so overwhelming that there was just this desire for something different?

Dole: Bob Griffin was sort of the catalyst there. And he was very bright, young. He didn’t dislike Charlie Halleck – nobody did. But it occurred to him and a lot of others his age, including me and a couple of guys from Kansas, that when you look around you keep coming back to Jerry Ford.

Smith: Why? What was it about Ford?

Dole: Just his personality, I think, primarily. He knew everybody. “Hi, Bob,” hi this, and it wasn’t just a fleeting hi ya buddy like some people are. They want to meet the next guy before they met you. So that’s how I remember it. He used to come around and sit down next to you on the floor and “How’s it going?” cause he’d been there a while. “Anything I can do for you?” He may have been looking down the road. Let’s face it, not too many get elected who don’t want to do something better. Part of it may have been that, but I think most of us felt just genuine friendship.

Smith: And he seemed to have a lot of friends on both sides of the aisle.

Dole: He and Carl Albert were great buddies. I don’t know anybody who disliked Jerry Ford. I assume there was somebody back there that didn’t. But again, the Democrats could like all of us because they figured we were always going to be a little group on the right there. But I was trying to think – in those days

we had a Chamber of Commerce rating, and ACU conservative union. We didn't have quite as many people giving us grades.

Smith: And you didn't have a 24/7 news cycle, and you didn't have cable TV, and you didn't have the internet, which has just transformed – and not necessarily for the better – the political process.

Dole: In the old days you put out those paper releases and then made phone calls to the stations back home – radio. If you were lucky, maybe you could get a TV interview, maybe. But now, it's a 180 degrees.

Smith: It's been suggested to us that one reason why Ford was seen as a logical replacement for Halleck, was that there was a feeling that Ev Dirksen was maybe a little too close to LBJ. That Dirksen sometimes was – that Johnson knew how to play Dirksen. That he'd go down to the White House and they'd have a couple of bourbons and they'd swap whatever they wanted.

Dole: Yeah, because Charlie Halleck and Dirksen were old drinking buddies, and I think Charlie figured out Dirksen's the star, so we don't need to do anything over here, just see what Ev's doing. But see, we didn't have any – well, Goodell and Griffin and the so-called Young Turks, they finally tried a Constructive Republican...

Smith: The Constructive Republican Alternative Program.

Dole: And it was CRAP. So that was a great beginning. But at least we had some people who decided that we've got to have alternatives. We liked the same Republicans in the same safe district; there is never any big swift or big change – maybe a few seats here or there. And we needed new blood. I think Jerry Ford wasn't a backslapper, I don't think. He didn't have an agenda that would put him up front every time. Sure, he wanted to be noticed, but he wasn't seeking anything. He might have been quietly, but to us newbies he was just a nice guy and we hated to vote against Charlie Halleck. He came out to Kansas for me and I went out to Indiana for him. He liked me.

Smith: How do you campaign for a job like that? Is it one-on-one, face-to-face – the candidate?

Dole: You mean like Ford?

Smith: Yeah, because I did sense from Rumsfeld, at least, that there was sort of this group.

Dole: Yeah, he was in the group, too.

Smith: Yeah.

Dole: He was my next door office neighbor. He kept trying to get me to run for some House leadership post. But anyway, he had guys like Les Arends, who everybody loved. He was the Whip. He was a corn farmer from Illinois and everyday he'd announce the price of corn. "A dollar and three cents a bushel today. Not going to make any money today." He'd just go on. And he'd stand over to the side, up near the Speaker's place and lean on the wall and talk to guys as they'd go by. Never criticism, but always something. "I read something nice about you in the paper, doing a good job, somebody told me you did a great thing in the committee today." He was really smart.

When you've got people like Les working for Ford, and Les was the number two guy, and he was a great friend of Charlie's, for him to come out for Jerry, sent a pretty strong signal, because nobody disliked him. I remember seeing Halleck right afterwards and he was just – you know, thought he'd been hit by a sledgehammer. I think he thought he had the votes. I always felt the three Kansas votes made a difference.

Smith: Well, they did – just numerically, they did.

Dole: I can take some responsibility for a couple of those.

Smith: Did you get anything in return?

Dole: No, but we said among ourselves – well, if we stick together, at least we've got some – if we've got a problem we'd go to Jerry and he knew. There may be others that did the same thing. We probably did get something in return, I've forgotten. He may have, and I think he did come out and speak on Kansas Day. Now, that was a big thing then. We didn't expect any pork.

Smith: You go on to the Senate in '68, and establish a reputation as a strong defender of the Nixon administration. And then along comes Watergate. You're in the Senate, he's in the House, did you run into to him? Did you see him?

Dole: He was pretty close to Nixon, as you know better than I do. I never talked to him about, that I can remember, about Watergate, or that I was chairman.

Smith: I think the thing out of all of that, that genuinely dismayed him the most, was the language on the tapes.

Dole: Yeah.

Smith: He was genuinely shocked.

Dole: Oh, I was, too. That's when I really lost my – I could explain everything else away - but the way he was brought up and the family and the Quakers and his mother - God the four letter words came streaming out like his language. Growing up as we did, if you ever used a four letter word, you got the soap in the mouth treatment. We didn't do it. And here the President of the United States using the words, that a-hole, it really brought him down from a ten, or maybe an eight to a four. There were a lot of people I think, a lot of little old ladies out there and a lot of older people –

Smith: A lot were Nixon supporters.

Dole: They probably swore a little themselves, but to hear the President of the United States, not just a word or two, but shhhhh.

Smith: That raises a big question about Ford. It goes to the pardon; it goes to a whole lot of things.

Dole: In fact, I never heard Ford use a four letter word – except his own – Ford. We used to campaign saying, "These are two four letter words you can live with. Ford and Dole."

Smith: That's a good slogan.

Dole: Yeah. He didn't run around using them. And I always think people who do that are insecure. They don't know how to get any recognition, and so they use filthy words.

Smith: Ford said later on, and I believed him, that he was shocked that Nixon lied to him. And it raises the question: there is a kind of a Boy Scout – the Eagle Scout – quality in Ford, which is very admirable. But at what point does it sort of shade over into a kind of naïveté? Was he naïve in some ways? He saw the good in people; and he wanted to see the good in people. And he thought he had no enemies, which is, again, very admirable. Is it affordable in a president?

Dole: Well, I don't have any doubt, I don't have any proof that Ford had to do some things to survive and let the country survive, too. I mean, the healing of America – was it 80-20 against the pardon? Now it's 80-20 for the pardon? We lost the election by eleven thousand votes and there's no doubt about it, I think he was pretty bitter afterwards because he made the right choice, and I assume that he calculated the politics and all that.

Smith: But maybe miscalculated the reaction.

Dole: Maybe. But I always wondered if there was a big trial going on and he was the president, and they were saying the Republican Party did this and the Republican Party this, and it was only one person. Was it Kevin Phillips who wrote the book about the emerging Republican majority in the country, particularly in the South? And boy, after that it was just shhhhh.

Smith: You felt it, obviously, because you were in the middle of a very tough re-election campaign. Do you remember how you first heard about it? I assume no one talked to you beforehand in terms of advice about this.

Dole: Thank goodness. Yeah, which is a finding that Senator Ervin made in the report, that Senator Dole had nothing to do with the Watergate. Which I thought was very nice of him.

Smith: Do you remember how you heard about the pardon? It was a Sunday morning, were you here or out in Kansas?

Dole: I was here and I was leaving the apartment for some reason – to be on a talk show, I don't think it was that – I heard about it fairly quickly, and then I remember Bryce Harlow saying, "Well, this story has no legs. Two or three days, it's out of here." In two or three days, it was just starting to flame up.

- Smith: Did it hurt you in Kansas?
- Dole: Yeah, because I was party chairman and some of the Democrats – my good buddies – were trying to indicate that I probably had a – what I said to \_\_\_\_\_ in my apartment and all that stuff.
- Smith: But then the pardon on top of everything.
- Dole: Oh yeah, the pardon.
- Smith: Did it sort of toss you an anchor.
- Dole: You see these signs when you go campaign, Pardon Me. People are pretty creative, just like they are in these Town Hall meetings.
- Smith: Did you talk to him at all? He picked you a couple of years later to be on the ticket. So he obviously...did you ever discuss the pardon with him?
- Dole: Nope. Oh, well, I think to the extent that something had to be done. I mean, Jerry was a proud guy. He wasn't going to get up and mealy mouth and fumble around. He was direct and "I did it for the right reason," even though he might not have. Who knows what was really kicking in his head? He surely had his political calculator turned on. But that's alright. It's about politics. People go, "Everything is politics." I said, "Well, give me a better alternative, then." There're some bad apples in politics, in both parties. And I think Ford – he had a little group didn't he? A little group of friends? John Burns from Wisconsin, and...
- Smith: Well, Jack Marsh, who was very close to him. You pull out the race in '74, you win it narrowly. When did you begin to think about the vice presidency?
- Dole: I don't know who went off on that. I think Noel Koch – remember Noel Koch? He started thinking that would be a great thing and he wrote some speeches and stuff like that.
- Smith: Was one factor the decision to have the convention in Kansas City, for example?
- Dole: That was a factor. Ford was in trouble with America's farmers. I'd been on the Ag committee and was pretty established. We had a good reputation with

the veterans, so did he, and I wasn't tainted with any – nobody ever said that I was involved in Watergate. And I think he thought he could trust me. He had watched me in the House and knew pretty much who I was, and who my friends were. You can tell whether you want somebody around you by the people you see them with. And the people I mingled with were the same ones that got him elected.

Smith: And at the same time, as I understand it, at least, you were also seen as someone who was more than acceptable to the Reagan wing of the party. Now tell me about when Nofziger – wasn't Lynn involved?

Dole: Nelson Rockefeller also gave me a thumbs up. And who was the national committeeman?

Smith: From New York? George Hinman.

Dole: Yeah, he really liked me for some reason. And he made sure that Rocky put in a good word. And then Lynn was supposed to be my agent. I was never sure he did anything.

Smith: To the Reagan camp?

Dole: Yeah.

Smith: And how long had you known Lynn?

Dole: Lynn? Oh, God, seems like forever. But he worked for me in the committee when I was chairman. I remember we were nominated and my first speech was to a Legion group in Seattle. We didn't have any staff, so they stuck Lynn Nofziger and a couple of other guys I didn't even know on the plane. This was the Dole campaign. Talk about being disorganized. And Lynn spent most of his time wisecracking. And to get him to be serious sometimes will drive you nuts, because he had a pun or a joke or whatever.

Smith: How do you run for vice president? I mean before the convention? How do you sort of make your interest known?

Dole: The only guy I know that ever ran really was Dan Quayle. Because the more I look back on that, the more I know how he got on the ticket. He would,

every policy lunch when Bush would come up and have lunch with us, Bush would come up early and he had a little room in the Capitol, and Quayle would be in there visiting and he was buttering Bush up every week. It didn't occur to me until pretty late that this guy's on the campaign trail.

Smith: Because your name was also in '88 bandied about as a potential. Would you have done it?

Dole: Ah, probably, yeah. All these guys say they don't want it, probably wasn't going to get it.

Smith: We heard names - Ruckelshaus, I guess, was in the mix, Howard Baker was clearly considered. There's still some debate over whether Ann Armstrong's name was at least on the list.

Dole: Yeah, I think she thought she was going to get it.

Smith: Really?

Dole: Be a woman on the ticket and all that stuff.

Smith: Because they were way behind, and so you needed a Hail Mary.

Dole: Thirty-one points, I think. And then the WIN program – Whip Inflation Now. And all we had were little buttons. How do you whip inflations wearing a button? But again, Ford - you talk about an indefatigable worker, well, you know, the guy never stopped. And he was in great shape and I assume he had a drink or two, I don't know. But he wasn't a problem drinker, smoker. I think he prided himself on his physical condition. So fourteen hour days probably didn't...

Smith: And he loved the rubber chicken circuit. He just loved being out there. And in fact, that was one of the problems in the '76 campaign in the race against Reagan. There's a wonderful story that Stu Spencer tells. Because Stu had been brought in before the convention and things weren't going well.

Dole: Yeah, I know.

Smith: And it was the end of the week. It was Friday, he was frustrated, he was going through a messy divorce on his own back home. So he's in the Oval Office

with the President and Dick Cheney. Just the three of them. And he's got the unenviable assignment of politely convincing the President that maybe he shouldn't go out on the road as much because he had these not very good speeches that were coming out of the speech office, and he'd go out there and his numbers would go down. And so basically they were devising the Rose Garden strategy. But the way Stu tells the story, and Cheney confirms it, only Stu Spencer would say this. He tried every euphemism he could think of, and finally lost it and he said, "Mr. President, you're a great president, but you're a f'ing lousy campaigner."

And Ford not only took it, but later on, when Jules Witcover's book about the campaign came out and it had this story, Stu was furious with Cheney. And he called him up, "How could you..." and so forth and so on. And finally Dick says, "Stu, there was a third person in that room. It was the President who told the story on himself."

Dole: But that's where – as you say – the Rose Garden strategy...I used to say, they sent me out in the briar patch and Ford stayed in the Rose Garden. It was pretty effective. He got a lot of press, didn't have to give speeches. He's a wonderful man, a big heart, he'd laugh, but his timing was terrible. He couldn't tell a joke. He used to tell the joke about the golfer, how he hit three things. The eagle, the... and he just didn't quite have it timed right and when people were supposed to laugh, they thought there was more coming. He just didn't have Reagan or Kennedy's timing.

Smith: He wasn't a television president.

Dole: No. But you get him one on one in a conversation, because he had exceedingly high credibility – and he was good. But to give a set speech, which he read, and I don't know whether he used a prompter or not, probably some, but he liked to read them, too. And that's really too bad because he had all these great qualities, but you're supposed to be a movie star and everything else with it, and be a great speaker – that's not what we really want in a president. It's good if you can have all those qualities, but what you want is an honest man or woman with integrity and some values.

Smith: And judgment.

- Dole: And he had it. I've got that picture in the next room of all the presidents, and I always say, "Here's the most unappreciated president I ever served with." There's ten of them. Because he knew more about appropriations, he knew more about the issues. If Ford were dealing with health care, God, he'd know every little detail, and that thing is complicated. I was on the health committee, and I'm not stupid, but God, is that complicated. It's not just about this public plan or this or that, it's 5,000 pieces. But Ford would have known.
- Smith: He's the last president to brief his own budget. To get up in front of a room full of reporters and introduce the federal budget and stay there and answer every single question until they were done. That's intelligence.
- Dole: Yeah. Everybody has their down side, I'm trying to – you know Ford got a little short with me a couple of times in the campaign when I announced we were going to raise support prices on wheat in Minnesota. He called and said, "If it's alright with you, I'll announce the good news." So, "Yes, sir, Mr. President." I guess I got the script wrong. There was something else, one other time.
- Smith: The night of the debate – your debate with Walter Mondale – did he call you afterwards?
- Dole: Yeah. He thought I did great. So did Mel Laird. Called me up and said, "God, I didn't think you had it in you." And I said, "Well, we'll see what happens."
- Smith: Speaking of phone calls, do you remember the call at the convention when he called to ask you to be his running mate?
- Dole: Oh, yeah. What was it? Five something in the morning – six? We were right down the hall from the Texas governor.
- Smith: John Connally.
- Dole: Who everybody thought was going to be it. So all the camera people were lined up, ready to get big John coming out of the room, and I'm trying to think of the ABC reporter who called me and tipped me off. You remember his name?
- Smith: Was it Hal Bruno?

Dole: No. He's a...

Smith: I know, I can see him.

Dole: He said, "How would you like to be vice president?" I said, "Well, I'm already out here, I might as well take the job." We were just kidding each other. And before long the phone rang and it was Ford. He said, "I'd like to talk to you, think you could come over to the Muehlebach quietly," come down the back door – all that stuff. So we got over there without being seen. Oh, another time he cautioned me, "You know, Bob, we don't need any Jack Benny in the White House." In other words, I know you like to have a lot of fun, but let's don't have too much.

Smith: Did Elizabeth go with you over to the hotel?

Dole: Yeah, but she sat in the other room. So we had a pretty good heart-to-heart talk. I think he said he trusted me and he thought I could be helpful with certain groups, and we had a tough row to hoe, we were in the ditch. But we knew Carter never was popular – he's kind of a pious – very nice man. In fact, he came out to Kansas – you were there – to dedicate the Institute. He was kind of a folksy guy but it didn't seem like it was real.

Smith: In the course of the campaign, did you run into foot dragging on the part of some Reagan folks? Was that an issue? Was that a problem?

Dole: Oh, both feet, yeah. I met with Reagan in Denver at the airport, New Hampshire, and he was willing to meet with me, but I'm not going to make a lot of press. A defeated candidate for president meets with vice president candidate – that's no big deal.

Smith: What did you talk about?

Dole: Obviously, we talked about the campaign. But I never knew whether he really cared. His interest was in us losing. No doubt in my mind that Nofziger and some of the gang – they didn't do anything.

Smith: Did he do the bare minimum? Is that fair to say?

- Dole: Very. I mean, Reagan, if he'd gone on nationwide TV, you remember the convention – how he took it over at the end – if he'd have showed up for Ford at a big news conference or something. We only lost by eleven thousand votes. That's the closest race, I think, in a generation or two that everybody's forgotten.
- Smith: One thing I have to ask you about. We've talked to Dick Cheney about this; we've talked to a number of folks. Right after you were nominated, there was this idea about going to Russell. And all the people around the President said, "We can't do it. We're exhausted. We've just been through this terrible convention. Don't ask us." We've been told that you were looking on at one point, watching this sort of back and forth. Can you describe how it originated and what happened?
- Dole: Well, they said, "We don't have time to notify people." I said, "In Russell, I think we can get a hold of all the bridge clubs and they could probably postpone it a week. We're not going to New York City, we're going to Russell, Kansas."
- Smith: Was it your idea?
- Dole: I reinforced the President that there wouldn't be any problem getting people there. And we're that close to my hometown and it would make news, and it would indicate the President is going to have a vice president he can rely on and all this stuff. And it sends a signal of whatever he wants.
- Smith: Was it his idea? Was it Ford's idea to go to Russell? I mean, where did the idea originate?
- Dole: I think it originated with me, but I think Ford was the one who kind of grabbed onto it, and now all the other people were jumping on it. Not that they didn't want to do it, there wasn't any hostility. They were just worn out. But primarily they said, "We can't do it on this short notice." I said, "You can't do it in Russell, Kansas?" What did they have - 24 hours? And it turned out well and we got a lot of coverage.
- Smith: Now, there was that famous moment there, where the emotions got to you.

- Dole: Yeah, that wasn't easy. When that happens inside of you is when you try to end it. You know you shouldn't be doing it, but you're doing it and you can't control it.
- Smith: But I take it, the memories of what people in Russell had done for you, just came to you.
- Dole: Too much. Well, you look out in the audience and there's a guy that I know had done this. And this guy had given me a hundred dollars or this guy had done this. But, again, it was Ford who jumped up and started the applause, and just in that little 30 second or minute applause, I was able to regain my composure and went on. That's also the day that my mother locked him out of the house.
- Smith: You went to your house.
- Dole: Went to the house, there was some fried chicken. We never locked the door in a hundred years. She decided, "Well, I'd better lock it today." And she couldn't remember where she put the key. We finally found it.
- Smith: And he was perfectly comfortable with the whole thing?
- Dole: That's the thing about Ford. He wasn't some big shot from the city, he was a normal guy. And it was genuine. I'd go in there and look at those pictures on the wall, and it will give you, I think a pretty good judge – I think I'm a pretty good judge of character. But the one thing that Ford had, and I won't say that others didn't have it, but he had it – I shouldn't use the word in spades – but he had it. They ran around vouching for him, like, "That's right, Senator Dole's right."
- Smith: Did you think at the end – obviously, you were really surging in the polls.
- Dole: Yeah, one more day – God.
- Smith: Did you really think you were going to win?
- Dole: Well, Ford did, so I did. I think he really did think we were going to win. As I said [it] was Hawaii and Ohio, eleven thousand votes.
- Smith: Were you at the White House election night?

Dole: I was in the White House.

Smith: What was the mood?

Dole: Well, initially, it was pretty good. Then the states started coming – it was pretty good until a couple of hours into it. I don't think Ford – I think he may have checked in before he knew for certain. Hawaii is a long way out there.

Smith: That's right.

Dole: And Ohio. Somehow Carter – are there a lot of Baptists in southern Ohio?

Smith: Yeah. It's more Southern than Midwestern.

Dole: Which never even occurred to me. I thought, "Well, Ohio, that's a Midwest state." Yeah, it is part of it. But a little part of it down there is...

Smith: What did he tell you afterwards?

Dole: Every time we'd go somewhere, he'd say, "We made a great team." I was so upset, I think I told you, when I thought Steve wouldn't shake hands with me. "But don't let anybody tell you we weren't a great team." Every time I'd see him. He was just trying to make me feel good. I said, "We did come pretty close."

Smith: Well, you did what you were asked to do. You delivered the farm...

Dole: We carried the farm states, including Oregon.

Smith: Well, and Connecticut and Michigan and New Jersey. You look at the electoral map in '76 – it's almost an absolute reverse of the parties today.

I can't end without asking you, because you saw him toward the end. At the Mayo Clinic – I assume that's the last time you saw him.

Dole: Yeah, that's right.

Smith: You'd been up there.

Dole: Yeah, I was up there making a speech honoring veterans, and afterwards I went to the hospital. I was just trying to remember what we...

- Smith: I think Mike Ford was there.
- Dole: Yeah, Mike. He was very nice. Betty was in the hospital, too, and I didn't get a chance to see her. Again, I'm just trying to remember – he wasn't in very good shape.
- Smith: Were you able to have a conversation?
- Dole: That's what I'm trying to think. I talked, but he never even recognized I was in the room. That's was kind of dispiriting. He was that bad. He looked good. I said, "Mr. President, how is everything going? Anything I can tell you about what's happening?" He just sat there, or was in his bed, propped up. So, I don't know what that was, that last illness. You look alright, but you're not functioning. Now how long did that last?
- Smith: Just at the very end, I think. It was the last few months. And he certainly talked to a number of people in between. It may have been partly, at that point, medications. They were trying to find the right mix of medications. You know what that's like.
- Dole: Yeah, well, of course you're always like, "Gee, maybe it's something I said." Maybe '76.
- Smith: Naw.
- Dole: Then on the way to the airport, there's no way that guy – he's had it.
- Smith: How do you think he should be remembered?
- Dole: Well, I think his biggest challenge was the Nixon affair and I think he handled it properly. And history, I think, is going to treat him very well. He had the *Mayaguez*, or whatever it was, had that, but he never really had a chance – a four-year time to really get into it. I always thought he'd be a star on the domestic scene because he knew so much.
- Smith: Yeah.
- Dole: Nixon knew foreign policy, but Ford knew domestic policy, and Reagan really didn't know either one. But he's sort of like Obama, he's a quick study and was a charismatic person. And then Carter, of course, knew the stuff.

Smith: You were an honorary pallbearer at the funeral in D.C. Were you surprised at the reaction? I know that people in the media were surprised at how much reaction there was.

Dole: I was, too, because Ford never got any credit for anything. It was all Nixon pardon, Nixon. And he wasn't a darling of the media. So I figured this could be a little embarrassing. Why are they doing it? People are pretty smart. You don't want to misjudge the American people. They can read between the lines what people say on the evening news. And there was no reason not to like Ford, except for the pardon.

Smith: Which by then had come to be seen as an act of courage.

Dole: By then people thought, "Well, he was probably right."

Smith: It was fascinating to see the young people. People who weren't alive and they were seeing him for the first time in all those clips, and they were comparing that to the current situation and he looked pretty good.

Dole: Yeah, none of us are perfect, and he could probably give you a list of things of his imperfections, but they are very far and few between. And he had a nice family and never had any stories about Ford and women or whatever.

Smith: And then, of course, Mrs. Ford went on to have this extraordinary life after the White House.

Dole: Yeah. It was a great life.

Smith: I think that's it.

Dole: That's all I know.

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