

Dole’s gift was being present in every encounter

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Contributing writer

I’m honored beyond words to have this opportunity to pay tribute to my good friend, Senator Robert J. Dole of Kansas. Bob Dole who sometimes in jest referred to himself in the third person, was a Washington DC powerhouse, a beloved favorite son of Kansas, a great husband to “Liddy” and father to Robin. There were hundreds of people much closer to him than I, his staff, his family, his colleagues, so I don’t claim any special part of his life, however, he does claim a significant part of mine.

You’ll hear much about him in the near term, his accomplishments in policy, politics, his losses, and failures, but I’m writing on behalf of those who knew him well enough to call him a friend and actually have shed a tear or two over his passing.

I learned so much from this man, a mentor... about perseverance, about treating everyone the same, about working a little harder, about bouncing back from setbacks, and about how to effectively use wit to break down barriers, make friends and influence preferred outcomes.

From age 7 until most recently, Bob Dole not only remembered who I was with each random or scheduled meeting, but seemed genuinely interested in my well being, was always interested in the conversation, and wanted to help me be successful, a trait I’ve tried to carry forward with other people I meet.

What I’m saying here is in every meeting, in every conversation, Senator Dole was present, not aloof, not passing off things to his staff or handlers, but genuinely engaged. That’s really what made him truly effective as a politician and leader. I left every encounter feeling like I had a voice, had been listened to, had a friend. I was also wiping tears from laughing at his quips. Often doubled over belly laugh as he and I exchanged quips.

You see, making Bob Dole laugh was about the best thing ever. And it always made me so excited to call and tell my family and friends about what happened.

It all started in the fall of 1976, when Senator Dole was named by President Ford as the candidate for vice president.

He had ventured into my town, Sylvan Grove, Kansas and I knew little about history, politics or much of anything, but I was 7 years old, and when a big black sedan pulls into a town of 300 people, it’s a noteworthy event. I peddled my red dirt bike down a gravel road to see what this big black car was all about and got to meet him.

He stood tall, had a great smile and a genuine good nature, he held a pen in his right hand and shook mine with his left, and was immediately engaged in conversation with me as though I was an adult.

He was chain-smoking and taking a call or two on his mobile phone, and quipping to his driver about things I didn’t understand, but I remem-

ber making him laugh and his insistence that I tell my parents to “vote the Ford Dole ticket to get us to Pennsylvania Avenue” which was puzzling to me since we lived on Pennsylvania Ave. in Sylvan Grove. I responded, “It’s right there,” pointing toward home. He quipped, “The kid has better lines than the Senator” as he chuckled. I also was intrigued by Watergate and asked him if he knew President Nixon. Senator Dole said, “He’s a good man, Nixon. He was loyal to his friends, and people make mistakes, but he’s a good man.”

The Ford Dole ticket lost an election, but they gained a friend. I was a forever loyal Bob Dole supporter from then forward and later in life we shared our love and admiration of Richard Nixon in many conversations.

Through out life, The Senator was making news, brokering deals, raising money for campaigns and always during his trips to Kansas, I made a point to catch him at a press conference or event or walking down the street.

He always called me by name. He always asked me how things were in Salina, Manhattan, Kansas City or wherever I was living at the time. He was once surrounded by a dozen or so people in business suits, and I had been working in the yard all day and was dressed like a high school kid who mows lawns.

I was standing in the back, trying not to be seen; I just wanted to hear his comedic banter. He answered a few questions, poked

“Bob Dole loved Kansas, Bob Dole loved America, and he loved the many many second chances he got in life, and he tried to give it all back in many ways.”

The last few times I saw him he was growing more frail, he took a little longer of a pause between quips, but he was always on his mark. And instead of smoking, he was continuously sucking on lemon drops.

“These are better than cigarettes they tell me, Also it makes Elizabeth happy.”

I tell these more personal encounters, of which there were hundreds I could have chosen, not to try to give myself any sort of significance, but to tell those who didn’t know, that the great American military hero, political juggernaut, one who both teamed up with and challenged the likes of Ted Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and Tip O’Neil, that he was just a regular guy who cared about the people he met. Even a commoner with no agenda or an iron in the fire like me.

Bob Dole made me feel like I was his long-lost friend, every single time. Just like so many you will hear about in the coming days.

Bob Dole loved Kansas, Bob Dole loved America and he loved the many many second chances he got in life, and tried to give it all back in many ways.

And because of his desire to fight, to learn, to listen, to never give up, and to find the humor in life, I loved him too.

May God Bless you, Senator.

Jeff Chapman works in marketing, public relations and business development at Avant Acoustics. He grew up in Salina and is a former Manhattan resident.

Cousin remains unwillingly tangled in relatives’ longtime feud

DEAR ABBY: My cousin “Scotty” invited my husband and me to see his new house. He made it clear, several times, that my sister and her husband, “Ian,” are not invited because his wife doesn’t like Ian. My sister and brother-in-law would have no problem if they never saw Scotty again, and I didn’t intend for them to accompany us on this visit. However, every time I speak to Scotty, he reiterates not to bring my brother-in-law along.

I admit, Ian is a difficult guy to get to know, but I have known him for 40 years, and he really has a heart of gold. I think Scotty is being disrespectful to me by repeating that Ian isn’t welcome. How can I resolve this in a way that won’t result in not communicating with Scotty ever again? — RELATIVE DRAMA IN FLORIDA

DEAR RELATIVE DRAMA: The next time



Scotty starts on his rant about Ian, head him off by interrupting him and saying, “You have already told me that. You don’t need to repeat it.” Then change the subject.

DEAR ABBY: My dear husband died suddenly last year. It’s been difficult, but I am blessed to have good friends and close family. The hardest part, however, has been the four-plus months it took to decipher his online accounts. He left me few passwords, and many of his contacts were uncooperative, some even cruel. Why should it be impossible to

pay someone else’s bill? I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a log or written account of passwords and usernames. It could have saved countless hours of stressful negotiations. — LESSON LEARNED IN MICHIGAN

DEAR LESSON LEARNED: Please accept my sympathy for the loss of your husband. You are not the only spouse who has written about this very real problem. Sometimes the concept of a world without us in it can be difficult to comprehend, hence the hesitancy to share passwords. But death can come at any time, and, as in your husband’s case, with little — or no — warning. Readers, it can spare your loved ones a world of unneeded stress to log those passwords and make sure your spouse, trustee or attorney can access them in case of emergency.

DEAR ABBY: When my wife of nine months makes a dental or medical appointment, she gives her last name as her late husband’s last name. He died 10 years ago. Should I be disappointed with my bride since,

before we were married, she said she would adopt my last name? — NEWLYWED IN FLORIDA

DEAR NEWLYWED: Why your bride would be hesitant to do this, I can’t guess, but because it bothers you, discuss

it with her before it festers. Informing health care professionals about a name change is fairly simple. All one has to do is inform the receptionist that a new name should be entered into the computer.



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