

THE MAGAZINE FOR HELP AND HOPE

# ARTHRITIS TODAY™

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1991

*America Gears Up  
For the Senior Surge*

*Readers' Tips for  
Dealing with Depression*

*Special Report:  
Progress and Promise of  
Arthritis Research*

Sen. Bob Dole:  
**LEADERSHIP  
BY EXAMPLE**





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# ARTHRITIS TODAY™

November-December 1991, Vol. 5, No. 6

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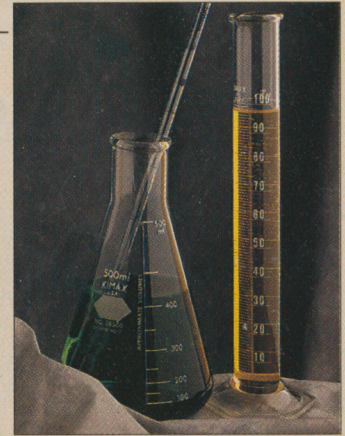
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*Arthritis Today* is published by the Arthritis Foundation, Inc., 1314 Spring St., NW, Atlanta, GA 30309.  
Call 1-800-933-0032 to order.



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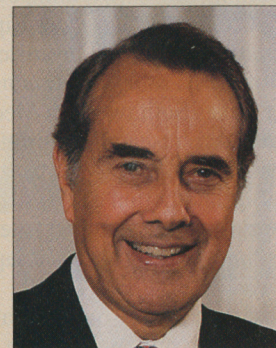
As the minority leader in the U.S. Senate, Bob Dole is an inspiring role model for people with physical disabilities.

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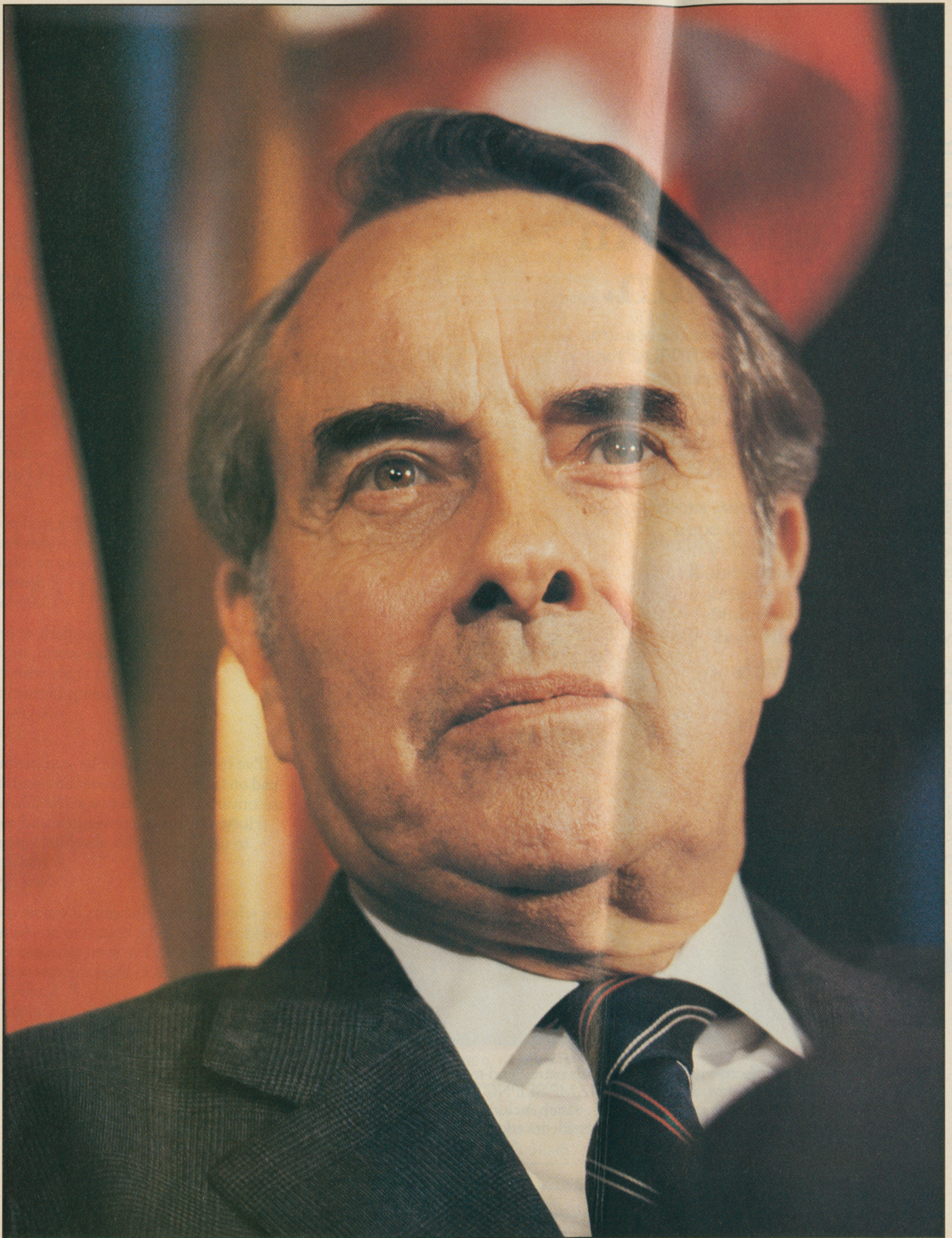
The clout of America's large Baby-Boom generation will change the way aging is perceived and treated in the years to come.



**ABOUT THE COVER:** Sen. Bob Dole is an active and effective advocate for people with disabilities, in part because of his own physical disability. See page 26.

**COVER PHOTO:** \*Morton Tadder





GAMMA LIAISON / JIM BOURG



# Senator Bob Dole LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

*Physical disability has never stopped Bob Dole from attaining his goals. Today the Senate minority leader is an inspiring role model and advocate for people with disabilities.*

by Cindy T. McDaniel

Within a few monument-covered square miles inside the Washington, D.C., beltway lies the greatest concentration of power in America and, increasingly, in the world. For over 200 years, the citizens of our country have sent our elected representatives to this hallowed land to champion our needs, preserve our rights and protect America's strength and integrity.

In each political era, there are distinguished members of this exclusive enclave who rise above the rest to become leaders of the leaders – true shapers of the unique democracy that is America. Kansas Senator Robert J. Dole has firmly established himself in this elite upper echelon.

For the past 30 years, Bob Dole has been a powerful force on the Washington political front, serving in both houses of Congress and as chairman of the Republican National Committee. He was the vice-presidential candidate on the Ford ticket in 1976 and has twice run for president himself. Since 1984, he has been his party's number-one man in the Senate – pretty heady stuff for someone who grew up in a small Kansas town during the dustbowl Depression days and had to borrow \$300 from a local banker to attend college.

Bob Dole's life and career are the stuff of legends – a battlefield injury in World War II that left him disabled and barely clinging to life; a long uphill battle to regain some degree of independence and to establish a career; a modest

beginning in local politics followed by a steady climb up the political ladder.

Today it could be said that Dole has arrived. His Capitol lair, the senate minority leader's suite, has a refined, opulent aura with a certain homey touch – if one considers marble fireplaces and brocade-covered antiques homey. The rooms have a quiet, dignified air befitting their respected occupant. The senator himself seems unaffected by this grand backdrop, appearing fit and much younger than his 68 years as he arrives for an interview in a rear chamber of his suite – a room that has undoubtedly housed meetings with other high-powered legislators, administration members and heads of government.

## **A Life in the Balance**

Today's conversation was not to focus on politics or domestic policy or international affairs, however, but on Bob Dole's life, and specifically how the events of one particular day in 1945 marked and changed his life forever. On April 14 of that year, near the end of World War II, Dole was severely wounded while leading his platoon – part of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division – on an Italian battlefield. His right shoulder was shattered. His spine was damaged, and he was immediately paralyzed. At the age of 21, he wasn't expected to live.

But Dole defied his dire prognosis and clung to life. Thirty-nine months of hospitalization,



## BOB DOLE'S VIEWS ON COPING WITH ADVERSITY:

"Beginning the morning of April 14, 1945, I learned the value of adversity. A handicap can become an asset, I've since discovered, if it increases your sensitivity to others and gives you the resolve to tap whatever inner resources you have."

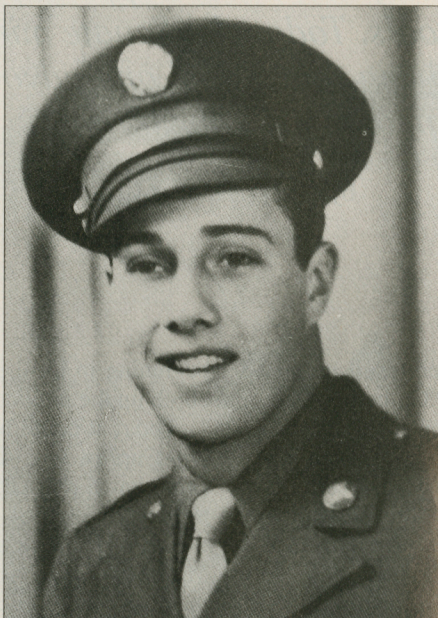
"Much of my life since April 1945 has been an exercise in compensation. Doors have been closed but windows opened. Maybe I couldn't use my hand, I told myself, but I could develop my mind. If unable to greet voters with my right hand, I could always reach out with my left."

"Physical limitations teach perseverance and humility. Since I have trouble enough lining up shirt buttons with the proper holes, breaking a fingernail can be a minor crisis. That's when a buttonhook comes in handy. I've long since gotten over my early feelings of embarrassment. Often these days I write to youngsters who are themselves disabled. Every time I sign my name I'm reminded of my mother's old maxim, 'Can't never could do anything.'"

*Excerpted from **The Doles - Unlimited Partners** by Bob and Elizabeth Dole, Simon and Schuster, 1988.*

rehabilitation and surgery returned much of his physical function, with the exception of his irreparably damaged right arm. Even today he has no use of his right hand and not enough feeling in his left hand to tell the difference between a dime and a quarter.

As much as the injury itself, Dole remembers the long, painful months of rehabilitation as a turning point in his life. "I lost about 70 pounds - from 194 to 122 - lost a kidney, couldn't feed myself or dress myself there for a long time, couldn't use my left arm or my right arm," he says. Speaking in the second person he often uses to describe his



COURTESY OF U.S. SENATE

*As a 21-year-old platoon leader in World War II, Dole was severely injured in battle - an injury that left him permanently disabled.*

own life, Dole recalls the humiliation of "having to get somebody to help you dress and to try out zippers and Velcro and every gimmick that came along so you could get in and out of your shirt."

What inspired him to hang on through this difficult time? "Well, I guess there is a period of time most [newly disabled] people go through when you're really not certain which way you're going to go," he says. "Some people can end up very depressed and never really able to get back on top if it. I was in good health physically before the injury, and I was always fairly competitive in school. Plus I was very young, and I still wanted to do something. I didn't want the whole thing to be lost."

So, as the young wounded war hero lay in his hospital bed acknowledging that he would never achieve his dreams of a medical career, he began plotting a new direction for his life. With the help of his first wife, Phyllis, who took notes and wrote exam papers from his dictation, he was able to graduate from law school in 1952. It wasn't long afterward that he took the plunge into politics, first as Russell County Attorney, then as a member of the Kansas state legislature.

While he was building his political career, Dole was also continuing to increase his physical independence and confidence. Through practice, persistence and ingenuity, he finally managed to do most things without help, although he still uses a buttonhook to fasten his shirts, he orders his meat at restaurants and banquets pre-cut, and he has to have help with things like tying bow ties and unwrapping candy bars.

"When I finally got to the point where I didn't need somebody to help me get out of the house in the morning, it was like I was born again," he says. "It's not that people aren't willing to help. I've even had hotel maids and bag boys help me put ties on. But in my case, once I get going every day, it's pretty normal now. A lot of people, particularly people with arthritis, have involvement in both hands and all extremities, so it's even more difficult, more frustrating for them."

### Compassion and Empathy

As the senator talks of his own difficulties, his heartfelt compassion for other people with disabilities also comes through. "I guess you learn a lot about people with disabilities when you have one yourself," he says. "You can almost spot people in a crowd who have a disability although you may not know precisely what it is.

"When I feel bad about my own situation, I look at other people who really are disabled compared to what I have, and they're out there doing something every day in a positive way. As bad as things may seem, you don't have to look around very long to find somebody who's really got a problem. You see a guy like John Kemp [executive director of the United Cerebral Palsy Association's Washington, D.C., office] walk into your office here with four artificial limbs - people don't believe it - and, of course, he travels by himself. I worry about traveling by myself, and then I see old John



Kemp come on board with a suitcase and I think, 'What am I complaining about?'"

Despite his high visibility, Dole says many people remain unaware of his disability. "Every time I go home, somebody says, 'Well, when did that happen?'" he laughs. The most obvious outward signs of his injury are the omnipresent pen in his withered right hand "to keep people from grabbing it" and his left-handed handshake.

While Dole has become increasingly open about his disability in recent political campaigns, he notes that "you've got to be a little careful; you can't be self-serving. I've never used my disability to get votes. I don't go around parading myself as a disabled veteran or something, but at the same time I think there are ways you can communicate it."

### Putting Resolve into Action

While it may not have been his sole reason for choosing a political career, certainly Dole has used his political bandstand to champion the rights of others with disabilities. His first speech as a freshman U.S. senator in 1969 was an appeal for experimental housing for the handicapped. Since then, he has been an unflinching advocate for the disabled, initiating and supporting legislation to preserve the Social Security system, to ensure quality and affordable health care, and to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities. At the time he talked with *Arthritis Today*, he was working with Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., on a bill to help ensure and pay for long-term care.

Dole was a strong supporter of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, which mandates new rights and protections for people with disabilities in the private sector. "I think the Americans with Disabilities Act is going to open a lot of doors – communications and transportation and job opportunities," he says. "It's very good legislation. It's probably the most important civil rights legislation we've had around here in years. We're just sort of at the tip of the iceberg, but I would guess the barrier has been broken now. You will see a lot of constructive steps in the next 15, 20 years."

Dole's efforts on behalf of people with disabilities don't end on Capitol Hill. He and his wife, Elizabeth, who served in both the Reagan and Bush cab-



PICTURE GROUP / JIM HEEMSTRA

*To deter people from grabbing his impaired right hand, Dole typically holds a pen during all public appearances. Above, he visits with disabled constituents. At right, Bob and Elizabeth Dole: A cause-oriented couple.*

inets and is currently president of the American Red Cross, are active and influential advocates and volunteers for causes they believe in. In 1983 the senator established the Dole Foundation to raise money from corporate donors to train the handicapped. "We've given about 70 or 80 grants over the last eight years to try to get people back into the work force," he says.

In recognition of his many contributions on behalf of people with disabilities – both on and off Capitol Hill – the Arthritis Foundation's Metropolitan Washington Chapter awarded Dole its fourth annual Marriott Lifetime Achievement Award last November.

### Defying Cliches

Despite all the honors and accolades that have come his way, despite his power and influence in government, despite the fact that his name and face are recognized across the world, Dole remains remarkably down-to-earth. His concern for people seems both sincere and palpable, and comes through in his genuine interest: "Are scientists any closer to breakthroughs against arthritis?" he asks. "Does it seem to run in families? Can arthritis be arrested in children? You just never really know



PICTURE GROUP / DAN FORD

when it is going to hit, do you?"

Much has been written about Bob Dole's life, and many common phrases have been used to describe his character: "strength over adversity," "survival of the human spirit," "the faith to endure" – all true; all appropriate. But perhaps even more fitting is another familiar label: "leadership by example."

As a role model for all people with disabilities, Sen. Dole has proved that physical limitations shouldn't stand in the way of achieving greatness, and that once greatness is achieved, compassion and concern for others shouldn't be forgotten. In his words: "It seems to me that the last thing a person should do is give up." □