



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**Politics in America
Bob Dole at the National Press Club**

Senator Robert Dole at the National Press Club Report One

September 2, 2005

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We must go back a few days for this report. I have not had an opportunity to send you the report on Robert Dole's speech at the National Press Club (NPC) on September 2. I was occupied with sending the New Orleans correspondence to you. And after all, I am no longer really working. This reporter activity is fun, but I don't let it get in the way of other activities, such as idleness and afternoon siestas.

Anyway, Robert Dole...oops...*Senator* Robert Dole. Even though he is no longer a Senator, everyone at the NPC addressed him as "Senator." That's OK with me, as long as I am not (still) paying for his (former) Senator's salary.

And while I'm at it, you might address me as *Lieutenant* Black, but make that *Lt. Commander* Black, as I was so-designated upon leaving the U.S. Navy. The Navy promoted me as a reward for my resignation. They were *that* glad to see me leave.

The figure below shows Senator Dole earlier in his career at the White House with other political leaders.



Encarta Encyclopedia, Black Star/White House Photograph

Dole's speech was about WWII because September 2, 2005, marked the 60th anniversary of the ending of the Pacific War against Japan, as well as WWII. We listened to his talk about battles in Northern Italy, where he was wounded. Next, he spoke about the aftermath of WWII and spent a few moments reflecting on the Cold War.

Senator Dole emphasized America's Cold War victory was to be credited to all the Presidents who had held office since WWII. He made this point a couple of times. I wondered why he mentioned this fact, but then I remembered some of President Reagan's eulogists claimed Ron was responsible for ending the Cold War. Dole disavowed this claim.

Wait one moment. President Reagan didn't initiate the Marshall Plan? How about the Truman Doctrine? Didn't he charter NATO, SEATO, and CENTO, the military alliances that circled the USSR from the Atlantic, across the Mediterranean, around the Indian Ocean, and into the Pacific? Was he the chap who ordered the Berlin Air Lift; confronted Cuba on the Missiles; ordered troops into Korea? Nope.

Although I was not fond of Reagan's fiscal and monetary policies, I liked the man and his statements about the USSR. I admired his statement, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall!"¹ I supported his other challenges to the corrupt USSR regime. But it is not fair to our other Presidents for Americans to be fed the line that Ronald Reagan ended the Cold War. The correct statement is, "Ronald Reagan was President at the ending of the Cold War, and he had a lot to do with its ending."

The USSR had been in the throes of coming apart years before Reagan became President. No question, Ronald's unequivocal stand against Communism was a big factor in the USSR becoming Russia once again. But let's give credit to others as well, including U.S. citizens' resolve and deep pockets.

Misery and Strawberry Tarts

Senator Dole said that after WWII, there had not been much progress in the world. He spoke of the misery so prevalent in many parts of the globe, and offered this view, "Man's inhumanity to man continues unchecked." He issued this claim as I was starting on my dessert. I decided to hold off eating the strawberry tart until he had something more pleasant to say. I tend to enjoy dining when the ambience is at least not depressing. For example, I shy away from Doritos while watching the evening news.

He proceeded to make the following points (I'm switching to present tense):

- The last fifty years has taught us that, "a peace treaty does not necessarily bring peace." (I hold off on scarfing down the tart once again.)
- We are in a dangerous world, and "complacency is lunacy." (Still holding.)
- We deluded ourselves to think the end of the Cold War was, as the academics said, "...the end of history." (Still holding up on consuming the pastry, and confused about how history would end because the Cold War ended. How about the history of what happens after the Cold War? But I'm not an academic and would appreciate a tutorial from my more erudite readers.)
- The first Gulf War "...quashed those thoughts." (Still holding, but now tempted to take a bite because I just heard the good news that history---one of my favorite subjects---is not dead!)
- "We wish all tyrants would retire. We wish our men and women did not have to go to war." (Yep, holding...but the tart is getting a bit dry.)
- "Wishful thinking is no substitute for national will." (Bravo! And down the hatch goes the strawberry tart.)

¹ Anyone for a friendly wager? I'll bet within this decade, a substantial number of Americans (and many others) will be saying, "Mr. Sharon, tear down that wall!" In the long run, the wall's position into Palestinian communities will prove to be politically untenable.

Other Observations

Senator Dole was not happy with the current administration's approach to dealing with the U.N. But he was circumspect about his criticism. After a few statements about the legacy of this organization, he concluded, "We should not lose sight of the U.N.'s positive attributes." Senator Dole is a staunch Republican, but several of his comments appeared to border on the Blue.

He made two other interesting observations before he concluded his speech and moved to questions and answers. Senator Dole said he once considered himself to be the most optimistic person in the world. That was before the '96 Presidential Election. Next, perhaps playing to the (National Press Club) crowd, he spoke of his impending meeting with Judy Miller (the journalist currently in jail), "The press must be suffered by those in power." A fine statement; all politicians need to heed this advice.

Robert concluded his speech, then opened up the Q&A. It was at this time that Senator Dole displayed his famous wit.

Senator Robert Dole at the National Press Club Report Two

September 2, 2005

Hello from Your On the Street Reporter, still reporting on Senator Robert Dole's speech at the National Press Club. Senator Dole concluded his talk as we finished off our dessert and coffee. He then fielded questions from the audience. (Unless within quotes, these Q and As are paraphrased.)

The first questions were about the Gulf Coast disaster. He was asked what he would do if he were the President. He said he had no advice to offer to Bush, but would devote every working hour to the situation. He was asked what else could be done. He said he didn't know, but also said, "We should hold our criticism," for a later time.

He was asked if the United States should accept aid from other countries. He replied, "Yes, somebody can help us for a change!"

Question: If you were President, to whom would you talk to try end the Iraqi conflict?

Answer: There's no back channels, so who can the President talk to? (Essentially, he was saying Bin Laden and his colleagues do not employ Foreign Ministers.)

Question: Are you still involved in Senate going-ons?

Answer: I'm no longer in the Senate, but I get my information from a good source---whether I like it or not.

Question: Your thoughts on the woman demonstrating outside President Bush's home in Crawford, Texas?

Answer: Senator Dole expressed condolences and added, "Our men and women are volunteers for this war, and we must face up to those realities."

Question: What are your thoughts on the closing of Walter Reed Hospital?

Answer: "I don't think it will happen." (Reporter's note: Too many members of Congress use it.) "I hope it doesn't close. It's a national institution... . Once I stayed in the Eisenhower Suite---made me feel like the President."

Question: Should the draft be resurrected?

Answer: "That would be a big mistake."

The Senator then offered this thought, "But serving in a uniform does give one a more balanced view of America."

Question: How is today's atmosphere in the Senate different from your times there?

Answer: "Hard to tell... . Possibly a little more conflict (now)."

Question: (Is the) Republican Party too far to the right?

Answer: “Not sure that is so.” Then after a pause, “Pat Robertson was never too warm to me, which made me feel good!”

Question: Back to New Orleans and a question about resources to help the area.

Answer: “Well...\$10 billion dollars was allotted, and no one was in town.Maybe that’s the way to do it!”

Question: Your take on the next Presidential race...too many candidates?

Question: No, when I was in the Senate, “If I walked into the Cloak Room and said Mr. President, everyone would turn-around.”

The Q and A was over, and the first utterance thereafter from the Senator was, “Do I get another coffee cup (for this speech)?” Keep it up, Senator.

On our way out of the NPC building, Senator Dole and his small staff (only two people) rode the elevator to the lobby with Holly and me. Unaccompanied by guards, police, or the Secret Service---and therefore no massive traffic tie-ups around the Nation’s Capital---the Senator made his way to an awaiting Lincoln sedan. How do I know his staff was not Secret Service? Because they smiled.

I like Senator Dole. I like his unpretentious approach to matters. He even exhibits a smidgen of humility. And he’s a funny guy.