

Soldier, Statesman, Servant

With humble beginnings in Kansas and at Washburn, Dole lived life of service.

By Jeremy Wangler and Sarah Towle

Washburn University joined Kansas and the United States in mourning the loss of one of its most decorated and celebrated alumni, **Sen. Robert Dole**, who died Dec. 5, 2021. He was 98.

“Sen. Dole made America a better place for all Americans,” said Washburn University President Jerry Farley. “Like many of the students who come to Washburn today seeking an education, Bob Dole grew up in a small town in Kansas. It is our duty to pass on to future generations his importance and the impact he made from those humble beginnings here in Kansas. He truly lived Washburn’s motto of ‘Non Nobis Solum,’ ‘not for ourselves alone,’ and we are proud to call him an alumnus of Washburn and the School of Law.”

Dole, BA '52, JD '52, H '69, H '85, was born in Russell, Kansas, on July 22, 1923, and enlisted in the Army in 1942. After recovering from an injury sustained during World War II, he enrolled at Washburn. He went on to serve in the Kansas House of Representatives, as Russell County Kansas attorney and as a member of the United States House of Representatives before spending nearly 30 years as a U.S. senator. He was chair of the Republican National Committee, Senate minority leader and Senate majority leader, where he set a record as the longest-serving Republican leader. Dole was President Gerald



Dole statue on Washburn University’s campus. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

Ford’s vice-presidential running mate in 1976 and a Republican presidential candidate in both 1988 and 1996, earning the GOP nomination in 1996.

Dole shared a long-standing friendship with **John Pinegar, BA '82**, who said Kansas was forever home to Dole – it was a central part of his life – and he never forgot that.

“Despite his enormous stature across the country, he was about as humble as they come,” Pinegar said. “Forever an optimist, he deeply inspired those of us who knew him well and knew what challenges he faced on a daily basis. He genuinely lived to make the world a better place — I’ve never met somebody who was so dedicated to helping others like he was. Time and again, he quietly reached out to lift up those who were facing difficulties in their lives. His compassion was unmatched, and I truly cherished the friendship we enjoyed.”

Former **Rep. Jim Slattery, BA '70, JD '74**, said that when he visited with Dole once, he inquired about the legislation he was proud of and Dole named three specific areas of work – the Social Security Amendments of 1983, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and his commitment to feed the hungry.

“He did all of this in the face of strong opposition from some of his constituents and some in his own party. He did it because he had the courage to do what is right even if politically unpopular at the time,” Slattery said. “This was the way Bob Dole led. In all these cases Bob reached across the political aisle and found friends who shared his desire to move our country toward a more perfect union.”

Dole also served as national chair of the World War II Memorial Campaign. In January 2018, Dole was honored with the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress’ highest civilian honor. He was given an honorary promotion to Army colonel that same year.

“In addition to his brave military service in WWII, I am most proud of Senator Dole’s work that led to the passage of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act which will benefit most Americans at some point in their lives,” said Carla Pratt, dean, Washburn Law.

Dole remained committed to serving and giving back to Washburn throughout his life. Along with his wife, Sen. Elizabeth Dole, they established and funded at Washburn the Senator Robert J. Dole Law Professorship, the Robert J. Dole Center for Law and Government and the Honorable Robert J. Dole Scholarship for Law Students with Disabilities. They also made substantial gifts to other areas on campus including the new School of Law building. He served on the School of Law board of governors and the Alumni Association and Foundation board of trustees.

Washburn University recognized Dole with two honorary doctor of law degrees in 1969 and 1985. A bronze statue of Dole was erected on campus in 2018 and an outdoor plaza at

the new School of Law building will be named in his honor. The Washburn Alumni Association honored Dole with a Distinguished Service Award in 1966, and the Washburn University School of Law Alumni Association gave him a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007.

“He built relationships throughout his life based on trust, respect, and integrity,” Farley said. “From his dedication to veterans and disabled Americans, to his principled congressional leadership, he set an example every American should emulate. Washburn University joins the rest of Kansas, the United States and entire world in mourning his passing while honoring, celebrating and memorializing his amazing life.”



Sen. Bob Dole, BA '52, JD '52, H '69, H '85 (left), speaking after a statue of him was unveiled at Washburn University in 2018. Photo by Doug Stremel