

## Bob Dole's Transcontinental Tour and American Voyage. A True-to-Life Travel Narrative Told in Reverse- Chronological Order

- Bob Dole (the Rock) arrived in Newark on August 19, 2001. Little fanfare awaited him because, perhaps, the transcontinental tour had gone mostly unpublicized. Completely unpublicized, truth told.
- Ohio is the only State with eight cities of 80,000 people, or more. I learned this, with Bob Dole (the Rock), at a rest stop in Ohio.
- Halfway through Kansas is a zoo of sorts, built on top of a prairie dog town. So prairie dogs appear everywhere always. It's a dusty, cheerless place, with cages for foxes, badgers, rabbits, birds. The big attractions are a five-legged cow and a six-legged cow. The extra legs aren't fully grown legs. They are afterthoughts. We took pictures of Bob Dole (the Rock) with the cows.
- After the burial we drive on. To everyone's surprise, our chosen route took us through Russell, Kansas, the birthplace of Bob Dole (the ex-Senator and Presidential Candidate). We drove around the town and took pictures of Bob Dole (the Rock) in front of every building or sign that said Bob Dole. Russell, KS, is also the birthplace of Arlen Specter, Senator (R.-PA).<sup>1</sup>
- He might have died before midnight. But we fell asleep after midnight and we neither heard him die nor sensed that he had passed away. We might have been having sex while he died. Or watching motel television and making jokes about ordering pay-per-view motel porn. Or I might have been lying in holy quiet with one arm resting on Erin sleeping, sad she was moving but not saying anything. We found Bob Dole (the Fish) where we'd put him on the motel-room table the night before. We buried him at a rest

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<sup>1</sup> No. I've got it wrong. Russell is not the birthplace but rather the "boyhood hometown" of both senators.

stop in Arriba, CO, with some ceremony. Deciding that the American Tour must continue, we found a rock with the approximate size and color of Bob Dole (the Fish) and named it Bob Dole. We put it in the small mayonnaise jar.

- We'd been told that fish don't take car-travel well. But Bob Dole (the Fish) had developed a reputation for hardiness and toughness.
- Bob Dole (the Fish) died in Colorado on August 16, 2001.
- Erin chose to drive across the country rather than fly.<sup>2</sup> I was along as volunteer alternate driver. Bob Dole (the Fish) was copilot. Or, alternately, first mate. He had zero (0) responsibilities, truth told. He traveled in a small mayonnaise jar (8 semifluid ounces).
- Bob Dole's move across the country coincided with Erin's move across the country, two years (almost to the day) after she moved to Salt Lake City. Erin tried to press Bob Dole (the Fish) on me as she was moving to Newark, no place for a fish.<sup>3</sup> I had a small basement, too small even for a small fish, and I wouldn't take any pressing so, No, I said. No fish. And so it was decided.
- Often, during Bob Dole (the Fish)'s second year, we thought Bob Dole was dying but he wasn't. He just liked floating upside down. We learned to ignore him and eventually he'd turn over again. As time went on we became more and more impressed with his ability not to die. Like Bob Dole (the ex-Senator and Presidential Candidate). Bob Dole (the Fish) was approximately the length of one phalange of the thumb and so transparent you could see his brain or internal organs.

<sup>2</sup> Erin also had a dog—a young brown-and-white of hound-dog inclinations named Annie—that I haven't mentioned because she plays a nonessential role in this narrative. She did almost get head-butted by a ram in Kansas, which was funny but nonessential. I only mention her now because she helped determine the mode of travel. You can't take a dog on a plane in the summer because the baggage compartment gets too hot.

<sup>3</sup> One is tempted to say that Newark is no place for any animal as a pet. But a year later Erin and her roommate had a pet duck (of all things, a duck) named Pat foisted on them after being bought at a Portugese street fair by a boy who, predictably, tired of the duck within the hour.

- My friend Erin's goldfish was named Bob Dole after the former Senator and Presidential Candidate—a resilient and persistent man. Bob Dole (the Fish) was also resilient and persistent. Erin respected Bob Dole (the Fish). She had Bob Dole (the Fish) for two years; four (4) other fish bought at the exact same time died within two weeks. She had love for that fish.