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A picture of the quilt Colorado resident Maureen White made for former U.S. Senator Bob Dole's 80th birthday in 2003 is displayed on one of the tables at Tuesday's Needles & Friends Quilt Guild meeting. White spoke to members about the quilt during the meeting. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Shortly after his loss in the 1996 presidential election, former U.S. Senator Bob Dole received a proposal to entrust his congressional papers, accrued over 35 years of public service to the University of Kansas, where he had studied before World War II service interrupted his studies.

Dole agreed to the proposal, but insisted that he did not want a personal monument: "It's not for Bob Dole," Dole said. "It's for the students. I don't need any buildings. Hopefully, it can do somebody some good."

Together, Dole and KU crafted the Dole Institute, which would not only house and catalog the papers for research use, but offer public opportunities for all individuals to discover how they might best serve their community, their state, and their nation.

Established as the Robert J. Dole Institute for Public Service and Public Policy and later shortened to the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics, the Dole Institute was created as a non-partisan forum, dedicated to public service, training for leadership, and promoting the ideal that politics is an honorable profession.



Housed on KU's West Campus, the Dole Institute broke ground in October 2001 and completed construction in July 2003.

At the opening of the institute, the former senator and presidential candidate was presented with a quilt in commemoration of not only the opening of the facility, but also in celebration of Dole's 80th birthday.

The creator of the quilt, Maureen White of Fort Collins, Colo., was in Liberal Tuesday evening to talk to the local Needles & Friends Quilt Guild about the item.

White said it took her three and a half months to complete Dole's quilt.

"It's a photo quilt," she said. "It has 102 photos of his life on the surface of it. We transferred all the photos to cloth and made a quilt out of it."

White said the quilt allowed her to make a deeper connection to Dole's life.

"I followed him politically, but I had never had a chance to be personally involved with him like I was through the quilt making," she said.

When the quilt was presented to Dole at the opening of the institute, White said she had the chance to actually meet the senator's family.

"I had the pleasure of going down there and mingling with the family and meeting them all personally while I was there," she said.

White spoke Tuesday about how the quilt project was started, what materials were used, how it was completed and what happened in the time frame in which she made the quilt.

"The whole quilt was completed in my quilt shop in Sterling, Colorado," she said. "We had full control of how things were put together, where everything was at any given time. I had a photo tech who transferred all the photos onto cloth, cleaned them up."

White said much work had to be done to some of the photos that are now seen on the quilt.

"We had pictures that had been cracked that had been carried in wallets, and we had pictures that had people in them that they didn't want in the photos," she said.

After the photos were fixed, the remainder of the quilt was finished in White's shop. She said she has not seen the quilt since it was donated to the institute.

"Sen. Dole left with it, and we haven't seen it since," she said. "We're hoping it's with him. There's a place for it at the Dole Institute."

White began quilting at the age of 17, and after continuing the hobby, she later opened her shop in Sterling, Colo., in 1994.

"It's just a passion for me," she said.

White, herself, is president of the Peaceable Friends quilt club in Greeley, Colo., a group which now has 130 members. She said her presentation Tuesday was one of few she makes to groups, as she prefers to stick to what comes naturally.

"I'd rather be quilting," she said.

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