

Press Releases: Interview With Melissa Scheffler of KWCH TV Wichita

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

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QUESTION: So let's talk about Senator Dole. Who is Bob Dole to you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Bob's a friend and a legend and a true patriot, a truly great American. When you think about the arc of American history over the last, what, 50 years now, Senator Dole's been at the front of a lot of it, whether it was his time in the service, whether it was his time in Congress, the work he's done back in Kansas all have been for the benefit of Kansans and Americans. And so when I think of Bob, it brings a great joy to my heart. It also inspires me to try and do my job even better every day.

QUESTION: His endorsement of you at the Senate confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, he said, President "Trump is lucky to have Pompeo." How important is you – is it to you to have him as an ally?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's been important in lots of ways. Personally, he and Elizabeth have both been great friends to Susan and me. We've known them for years and years. We – Susan worked on one of his early campaigns, too long ago now. Wouldn't want to say how long ago. So we've known them for a while. We love and admire them. To have his support means an awful lot. It's also the case that I see him and talk to him with some frequency. I ask him advice about things around the world. I ask his wisdom on the political situation on the ground. Bob will always tell me you need to get out to Wilson County and help someone. He still cares so deeply about Kansas. And so it also brings personal joy to me to get to work alongside such a legendary Kansan.

QUESTION: Yeah, I was going to ask you that, if you still get advice from him. What have you learned from him getting that advice? What kind of advice does he give?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This is a man of incredible deep honor and integrity, and frankly, I think that's the most important thing. He's been around this town in Washington, D.C., an awful long time, and one of the things he told me when I first came here now, goodness, almost a decade ago as a member of

Congress was your reputation you get to do once. Always tell the truth. Always get it right. Always be nice. Be friendly. You can disagree, you can fight – there's been no one who's fought for the things he cared about more passionately than Senator Dole. But when that's done, it's time – it's time to be a good Christian man, work hard, tell the truth. Mike, if you do those things, you – whenever it is you leave Washington, you'll leave with something that's really important: a reputation for the way that we know Kansans all want to be.

QUESTION: Speaking of his reputation, what do you think he'll be known best for? Because he has a lot of political achievements. You've got the World War II Memorial, you've got so much. What do you think Kansans will remember him the most for?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, it's a long list. The work that he did on the Americans with Disabilities Act was truly changing for lots of lives all around America and, indeed, all around the world. What I'll probably remember most is the times I got to go down and see the veterans who came back to the World War II Memorial. I would go out and greet the honor flights and Senator Dole would often be there as well, and whoever was talking to me at the moment he arrived was no longer talking to me. (Laughter.) They wanted to see – they wanted to see Senator Dole. And I know how much he cared about that. I know how much he cared about those who fought and served on behalf of our nation in World War II. He did each of them honor, and the work that he did to make their lives better I think will be something that they remember forever and that I will too.

QUESTION: Kansans are sure proud of you, and they're sure proud of Bob Dole. What do you think Bob Dole means to Kansas?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't think you should use our names in the same sentence. This is an amazing man. He embodies the best of Kansas. As Susan and I think about what Kansas delivers for us every day, the values that we bring here, Bob was here long before me, working on these same things. He's earnest, he's witty, he's funny, he works hard, he cares deeply about every single person and treats them with dignity and respect. Those are Kansas values that Bob brought here to Washington and they never left him.

QUESTION: He thinks the world of you. We were over there interviewing him and we told him who else we were speaking to. He could not say enough good things about you. He sees a lot for your future. What is it – how does it make you feel that someone like Bob Dole sees a great and bright, brilliant future for you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's humbling. There's a good story. When I was nominated to be the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, I called Senator Dole, and on the phone came both he and Elizabeth, and they were so happy.

QUESTION: You feel like their kid.

SECRETARY POMPEO: "It's so great that we have a Kansan, and you'll do a wonderful job, Mike. Tell me what I can do to help you." I still had the

confirmation battle yet ahead. "Tell me the things we can do to help. You'll be great." They were so kind, so generous, so willing to step out. This is a man who's accomplished so much. They were still so willing to engage. It was enormously humbling and gave me confidence in what I was about to undertake.

QUESTION: Can you share some personal stories? Since you guys go back so far, with your wife working for him, is there anything that kind of comes to your memory when you think of Bob Dole and just him being a human being? Because for so many people, he's up on there on that pedestal.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. Boy, the list is pretty long. I remember he called me – it's not been too many years ago – I was a member of Congress. And he said, "Mike, I'm going to go to the state fair. I'm going to Hutch. I want you to come sit with me at the state fair. I'm going to shake a few hands in the way that I have done for decades," and I – of course it was an honor, and we literally sat at the booth at the Kansas fair, and there were lines of hundreds of people, each of whom had their own story. Their mother had known him from a campaign, their grandma had seen him or known him, their cousin knew them from his days in Russell, Kansas. Every one of them wanted to thank him for his service.

And what I remember so much is Bob was always so humble. He was always – "I remember," and he has a great memory. "I remember so and so, and he, she was fantastic, and these are the things that that person did for me. Please, please thank them." It was something to really behold, to watch the lines of people from all across the state of Kansas want to just shake his hand and tell him a little part of their history with Bob Dole.

QUESTION: I talked to him in December when he saluted the casket of President George H.W. Bush, and that resonated throughout the country. I mean, that moment people were talking about, and I called him and I said, "Why did you do that?" And he said it just felt right, that moment where he stood up and did that. Part of the Greatest Generation, and we're losing the Greatest Generation. His impact and his role in this country, in the state of Kansas – I don't think you see that so much anymore.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, they don't make them like Senator Dole very often. The work that he did – look, we all know the history. He and President Bush had their moments for sure, but this was a man who had profound respect for our country and for its leaders and for service to the nation. I think that's what drove Senator Dole that day. He knew too that this was one of the last of the great American leaders from that generation in the same way that he is, and what you saw too was the respect for both of those individuals – certainly for the president, but for Senator Dole as well.

QUESTION: Moving forward and that advice that you get from Senator Dole still to this day, anything else you want to just continue to suck out of that guy? (Laughter.) Anything – any of that knowledge base that you still want to learn from him?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So many things. He still has lots of wisdom. One of the things he always does is he tells me when I get it wrong too.

QUESTION: He does?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure. "Mike, I think you got the wrong end of the stick on this one."

QUESTION: And does he persuade you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: He makes his argument, right. He makes the case and he – he's a keen observer, still to this day a keen observer of the American political movement, Kansas. He knows all of the tales. He'll tell me, "Mike, oh, Smitty's not doing too good out there." He loves that – he's passionate and he wants to make other people's lives better. Even at this stage of his life, he's still so committed to public service. And so I take heed when Senator Dole picks up the phone and says, "Hey, Mike, you ought to think about this one more time."

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, we're wrapping up here, so my last question for you. Anything else you want to add if you're speaking directly to the senator and the impact he's made on your life, your political career, and anything in the future?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, goodness. If I was talking to Senator Dole directly, I'd just tell him I love him, that Susan and I admire him, appreciate him. We wish him all the best in the coming days, and we'd tell both he and Elizabeth how much we enjoy being around them and we are so thankful they've been part of our lives.

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