



OPINION

Robert J. Dole: Ike is deserving of national memorial

By Robert J. Dole

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Few people outside the great state of Kansas know that our state motto, “Ad astra per aspera,” is Latin for “to the stars through difficulties.” A fitting phrase. Most Kansans have forebearers who headed west in search of a better life, enduring hardship along the way.

We Kansans cherish this heritage, and we are proud that our families saw their way through many difficulties as they made their way “to the stars.”

One of Kansas’ greatest sons knew a lot about stars, and how to earn them. Dwight David Eisenhower made his way from Abilene to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and then to the pinnacle of the Army’s leadership – a five-star general of the Army.

During World War II, this remarkable Kansan led the Allied forces to victory in Europe, where I proudly served under his leadership with the 10th Mountain Division on the Italian front.

Ike was not through when he retired from the Army. He had other chapters ahead of him, including two terms as president of the United States. Ike’s presidency was filled with remarkable vision and clarity: thwarting our nation’s foes in the Cold War, inaugurating the national highway system, launching the space program, and leading America to technological superiority and the information age.

So great was Eisenhower’s role in our nation’s history that, in 1999, Congress authorized a memorial honoring him in both his roles as president and general. Soon, in a 4-acre urban park adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the first presidential memorial of the 21st century will honor Kansas’ favorite son.

Against a unique backdrop depicting the rolling fields of rural Kansas, the memorial will combine the traditional elements found in memorials: statuary, quotations and tapestries. Already underway, an

innovative electronic “e-memorial” chronicles the pivotal moments of Ike’s life and will bring the memorial to classrooms, visitors and homes across America and around the globe.

Not bad for a young man from Abilene.

This memorial will also raise the stature of another Kansas treasure, the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene. When I visited all 105 counties in Kansas last year, everywhere I went people spoke about their enduring reverence for Ike.

It is time to finish this project for all Americans but especially for our veterans.

I’m joining forces with Kansas’ senior senator, my good friend Pat Roberts, a member of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission, and I am wholeheartedly supporting the effort to build the National Eisenhower Memorial. We Kansans want to see our great hero from Abilene remembered for his dedication to our nation and honored as a heroic and visionary leader.

Robert J. Dole is a former U.S. Senate majority leader from Kansas