## Small-town roots shape Hagel's goals

GOP candidate's upbringing and work ethic taught him to take challenges head on.

> By MATTHEW WAITE Senior Reporter

ing, Chuck Hagel is at home in a small- friends and neighbors. town coffee shop.

In a time of spin control and instant paign rally, or in every speech — as responses to attack, the Nebraska Re- though it's a mantra — that his campublican nominee for the U.S. Senate paign is about people. speaks his mind and often says things

For example, he freely says his votes would toe the Republican Party vote," Hagel said. "It's not TV. It's not line during debates on partisanship. He pre-spin nonsense. says he has no problems with bringing in well-known Republican leaders and in are people like high school classtalking about his work inside the mate Pat Puetz of Norfolk and Duane beltway at a time when the word "in- Reeves of Madison, a friend from the sider" is a dirty word in politics.

these days, old-fashioned. Build an both are proud of Hagel's past work. organization, round up a horde of canvassers, walk in parades, talk to the high school)," Puetz said. "He was voters on their turf and hope it all works probably not the best athlete or the on Election Day.

It worked in the state's May pri- mendous leader. mary, when he upset Attorney General Don Stenberg for the GOP nomination. cial.

He has a site on the World Wide fax machine works overtime. He does ther while still in high school. what is required in modern politics.

L in Wausa where Hagel comes alive. squad in 1967 and 1968.

Small-town Nebraska is where Rushville, Scottsbluff, Terrytown, meant for them.

York and Columbus.

On a three-day campaign trip through northeast Nebraska in early October, Hagel had stories to tell and memories to share in all the small towns where he stopped.

Hagel's roots — both political and personal — come from small-town Nebraska: from his work ethic, which he learned at his father's lumber yard in Ainsworth, to his values, which he took from his parents, to his politics, In the days of high-tech politick- which he inherited from his family,

Hagel repeats at almost every cam-

That philosophy and that belief is that would make other politicians reflected in our campaign," he says. "I have put my faith in people.

"On Election Day, it's people who

The people Hagel has put his faith Vietnam War. Both have been cam-Hagel's approach to politics is, in paigning for their longtime friend, and

> 'He was a tremendous leader (in smartest in the class, but he was a tre-

You could just tell that he was spe-

Hagel moved to Columbus after his Web. He has spent thousands of dol- father died. As the oldest of three lars for television and radio time. His brothers, he took the place of his fa-

His leadership was next needed in But it is in places like Daddy's Vietnam, where Hagel and his brother Country Cafe in Neligh or the Double Tom walked point for their infantry

Hagel and his brother were Hagel was born and raised - in a place wounded in combat - victims of a much like North Platte, Ainsworth, booby trap that killed another, but was



CHUCK HAGEL greets shoppers in a grocery store in Wausa on a three day bus tour through Northeast Nebraska in early October.



CHUCK HAGEL, born in North Platte and raised in small towns and cities around Nebraska, said America's

point all day, and their squad leader for his involvement in the Vietnam War decided to give them a break. Moments Memorial. later, the new point man walked into a booby trap, killing him and wounding husband, both were working in Wash-Hagel and his brother.

For their heroism, both were awarded purple hearts, a medal for erans Affairs office. those wounded in combat. Hagel also won another purple heart, three Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry, an American Spirit Honor Medal, an ers and gifts. Army Commendation Medal and a Combat Infantry Badge.

It was after he was wounded that side of Washington too seriously." he met Duane Reeves. The young Nebraskan was going in as Hagel was ous. When she only ate the broth of leaving. Hagel told Reeves that he her vegetable soup on one of their would go see his parents in Madison, dates, he sent her a basket of vegetables near his home in Columbus, and tell the next morning. them that their son would be safe.

Reeves, who is now a Madison County sulting group for cellular phone com-Commissioner. "He did that on his own panies. initiative.

"It was a real blessing to know we had someone who cared."

Hagel returned to Nebraska and worked several jobs, including being erans' affairs groups traveling all over a bartender and a newscaster for sev- the nation. eral radio stations. In 1971, he graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Then it was off to Washington to work for Nebraska Rep. John Y. inglife." McCollister from May 1971 to Decem-

After working for McCollister, & Rubber from 1977 to 1980.

In 1980, Hagel was the vice chair- Omaha. man for the Reagan-Bush presidential campaign.

The brothers had been walking was there that the groundwork was laid

When Lilibet Hagel met her future ington - she for a House of Representatives committee, he for the Vet-

They met at a picture-hanging ceremony. He asked her out and remained persistent by calling and sending flow-

"He had a good sense of humor," Lilibet said. "He didn't take the silly

And he was also a little spontane-

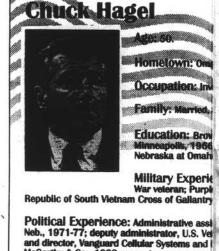
Chuck Hagel went from the Veter-"He didn't have to do that," said ans Affairs office to a post at a con-

> Chuck and Lilibet Hagel were married in 1985, a time when Hagel was starting his own cellular company, Vanguard. He was still busy with vet-

> 'He has always been that kind of guy with his hands in many different things — worthwhile causes," Lilibet Hagel said. "It's made for an interest-

In 1987, Hagel took over the World ber 1972. He started as an aide and was USO, a company deeply in debt and McCollister's administrative assistant near bankruptcy. He shored up the in one year, a post he held for five USO's accounts and returned it to sol-

In 1993, Hagel was approached to In September 1981, he started Kerrey, who was up for re-election in Republican views. working for the Veterans Affairs office, 1994. Hagel said no without hesitation where he was deputy administrator. It because of his young children.



Since their children, Allyn Elizabeth and Charles Ziller, now 6 and 4 years old, were born, the Hagels have molded much of their lives around them. Their first child was much of the reason they moved back to Nebraska.

McCarthy & Co., 1992-present.

The Hagels are raising their children the way they were raised: with love, discipline, freedom to do what they want, high expectations for success in whatever they do and an emphasis on the spiritual side of life.

And Chuck Hagel says he will not let his campaign affect his family, hich is something the Hagels ha worked toward: keep home life at home and politics out on the campaign trail.

Now, when they are out campaign-The couple moved back to Ne- ing, Lilibet Hagel usually stays home Hagel worked as associate manager of braska in 1992, where Chuck Hagel during the weekdays to be with the government affairs for Firestone Tire took over as president of McCarthy children. They only bring the children Inc., an investment banking firm in along when they know it is appropriate and the children will have firm

And Hagel is having fun on the trail, run against Democratic Sen. Bob telling people about his conservative

Hagel's other campaign promises have been that he would "cut taxes, cut