

■ John Goossen, Publisher
■ Sam Shapiro, Editor (291-1452)
■ Jim Stanton, Editorial Page Editor (291-1520)
■ Tim Flattery, Letters to the Editor (291-1460)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2003

EDITORIAL

Cedar Valley Alliance: Total is stronger than individual parts

Setting out a solid foundation with broad representation will make success more likely for an organization such as the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance.

Last week's organizational meeting of the metro area's new economic development umbrella group was promising, suggesting a level of cooperation not often seen among area government and business leaders.

Those organizing the joint operation seem to recognize the importance of moving swiftly. The organization will last as long as the members see its usefulness.

"We have a year or so to build the trust of the subsidiary organizations," said University of Northern Iowa President Robert Koob, one of the organizers. "It's up to the organization to prove we can work better together than we do separately. We fully believe this is in the best interest of everybody in the Cedar Valley."

The Greater Cedar Valley Alliance arose because business leaders and developers saw the necessity of unity of purpose. The new group will be like a holding company in which the various existing economic development groups share interest.

The hope is to provide a collective voice for area economic development — whether industrial, retail or housing — while still maintaining the integrity of the member organizations. Not stepping on toes could be a challenge.

The meeting at Sunnyside Country Club in Waterloo was held to hash out the group's corporate structure with the various groups. Representation came from the chambers as well as the Cedar Valley Economic Development Corp., the downtown groups, the convention and visitors' bureaus and city governments. At large members will round out the group.

By the end of the meeting the



Dems' stances on Iraq unclear

The only presidential candidate with a truly coherent position on President Bush's Iraq policy is Howard Dean. He supported it before the war started, he supports it now, and he thinks or pretends to think it's working well.

Among the Democrats, Howard Dean's position is almost coherent. He opposed the war before it started, and he believes it has not turned out well. There is a tiny question of why Dean bothers to have a "seven-point plan" for Iraq instead of just one point: Bring the troops home. After all, Iraq is less of a threat to international order and its own citizens than when Saddam Hussein was in power. If it wasn't worth American lives to improve the situation then, why is it worth more lives now?

It's downhill from Dean. Joe Lieberman probably comes next. He was a strong supporter of removing Saddam by force and yet was prescient in warning, before the war started, about some of the problems everyone points to now. Then come Dick Gephardt, John Edwards and John Kerry. They all supported the resolution authorizing Bush to go to war — a position with the whiff of strategy about it, given each man's record or lack of it on such issues — and they all are highly critical of what that resolution has wrought. Trailing the parade is Wesley Clark. His claim to fame is that he supported the use of ground troops in the



Michael KINSLEY

adventure in Iraq is a promising and legitimate issue for the Democrats. But what they say about Iraq is a problem for the contenders who supported Bush's decision to go to war. Do they now think that support was a mistake?

If they say yes, supporting the war was a mistake, they are declaring that in a last case of the most important decision a president must make — when to go to war — they got it wrong. And if they try to explain their way out of this by talking about how the Bush administration "deceived the American people," they sound like George Romney, who was laughed out of the 1968 presidential race for saying he had been "brainwashed" into supporting the war in Vietnam.

On the other hand, if they say, "No, I don't regret my support for this war," the question naturally arises: Well, if everything you're complaining about doesn't change your mind about the war itself, why are you making such an unholy fuss? Apparently, if you had been president, you'd have

been the result of Bush's inept leadership during the war and/or the post-war occupation. He should have waited longer for diplomacy to work. He should have insisted on the participation of other big countries. He should have been better prepared for the challenges of rebuilding.

But the resolution these gentlemen supported gave war-making authority to George W. Bush, not to some idealized, all-wise president such as themselves. The resolution did not say "This authorization to start a war is valid only when used in conjunction with at least two other countries large enough to spot on a medium-sized world map." Nor did it tell Bush to wait until... until... until when? The resolution gave George W. Bush the authority to decide when the waiting for friends to join in or the foe to back down had gone on long enough. If Bush bungled this authority, entrusting him with it was a big mistake.

Another dead-end line of argument is that the war resolution never was intended to lead to war. Goodness, no. War was the last thing anyone had in mind when voting to authorize a war. The idea was to give Bush enough leverage to work out an acceptable deal and thus avert an actual war. And then Bush ruined everything by going and having a war after all. Who'd have thought it?

ing the integrity of the member organizations. Not stepping on toes could be a challenge.

The meeting at Sunnyside Country Club in Waterloo was held to hash out the group's corporate structure with the various groups. Representation came from the chambers as well as the Cedar Valley Economic Development Corp., the downtown groups, the convention and visitors' bureaus and city governments. At large members will round out the group. By the end of the meeting, the directing board had grown to 42 members — understanding the diverse interests involved, but also raising a natural concern of becoming unwieldy.

We hope the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance is given ample opportunity to succeed.

It seems logical that outside developers and business owners would be favorably impressed if greeted with a single professional voice rather than Balkanized turfdoms. Indeed, most local residents don't know the difference between the Cedar Valley Economic Development Corp. and the Waterloo Industrial Development Association, so how can outside businesses be expected to navigate the area's economic development groups?

The rivalry between Waterloo and Cedar Falls dates back to their founding. But the dividing line of late has been the gap in development between the communities.

Cedar Falls, with its fiber optics backbone, has drawn businesses that rely on technology, while Waterloo has drawn more large retailers.

The economic health of the entire Cedar Valley, though, needs to be paramount rather than parochial concerns. One ailing sector — or community — detracts from the success of everyone involved.

We're in this together.

Communities have seen the usefulness of an umbrella economic development organization in and around Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, the Quad Cities as well as in communities across the country.

But making it a success in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls-Evansdale area will require patience, a leap of faith and seeing a self-interest in the broader good beyond city borders.

Next man probably comes next. He was a strong supporter of removing Saddam by force and yet was present in warning before the war started, about some of the problems everyone points to now. Then come Dick Gephardt, John Edwards and John Kerry. They all supported the resolution authorizing Bush to go to war — a position with the whiff of strategy about it, given each man's record of lack of it on such issues — and they all are highly critical of what that resolution has wrought. Trailing the parade is Wesley Clark. His claim to fame is that he supported the use of ground troops in the Balkans. He squandered the non-officeholder's luxury of voting in hindsight on the Iraq resolution by not having his story straight.

The slow souring of the American

their way out of this by talking about how the Bush administration "deceived the American people," they sound like George Romney who was laughed out of the 1968 presidential race for saying he had been "brainwashed" into supporting the war in Vietnam.

On the other hand, if they say, "No, I don't regret my support for this war," the question naturally arises: Well, if everything you're complaining about doesn't change your mind about the war itself, why are you making such an unholy fuss? Apparently, if you had been president, we'd be in the same mess.

Like mice frustrated in a maze, the candidates seek escape routes out of this logical trap. Sometimes they say that the current mess is not the result of the decision to go to war. If

to join in or the foe to back down had gone on long enough. If Bush bungled this authority, entrusting him with it was a big mistake.

Another dead-end line of argument is that the war resolution never was intended to lead to war. Goodness, no. War was the last thing anyone had in mind when voting to authorize a war. The idea was to give Bush enough leverage to work out an acceptable deal and thus avert an actual war. And then Bush ruined everything by going and having a war after all. Who'd have thought it?

Unfortunately, a democracy cannot bluff. You cannot have a public debate and vote on whether to pretend to be willing to go to war.

Michael Kinsley writes a column for the Washington Post.

A tyrant caught, a window opened

The capture of Saddam Hussein will have a crucial psychological impact — on Iraqis, and on the Arab world.

This doesn't mean the insurgency will end. Clearly, this bedraggled man inside a hole without a cell phone wasn't organizing the attacks on Iraqis and U.S. troops. Those attacks may even increase in the near term, as the insurgency's Iraqi organizers seek to prove they're still strong.

But the seizure of Saddam, alive, provides a psychological turning point in the Iraq story. It gives U.S. officials a crucial second chance to get their flagging postwar policy right.

This arrest will dispel Iraqi doubts that U.S. officials wanted Saddam to be apprehended. Many Iraqis believed he was still free because that was what the United States wanted. This fueled Iraqi mistrust of America's broader intentions and undercut U.S. efforts to get human intelligence about the insurgents.

When I heard Saddam Hussein was caught, I recalled four English professors I met six weeks ago in Baghdad. In offices that had been looted of all furniture and books after the war ended.

These women spoke fluent English and held doctorates, but they — like many, many Iraqis — thought America's failure to catch Hussein was part of a deliberate plot. The devious Americans wanted to keep Iraqi weak so U.S. troops could stay forever and control Iraqi oil.

"We know you trained the looters who wrecked our buildings," one professor told me. "It was essential



Trudy RUBIN

for America to cause this anarchy in order to control our country." Another professor asked whether Saddam was being hidden in the United States.

Sound bits? Perhaps, but such thinking was widespread. Few Iraqis understood why an all-powerful America couldn't find one man. Long deprived of accurate information, Iraqis learned to compensate by hatching conspiracy theories.

Suddenly, Iraqis must reassess. The graphic film footage of the bedraggled captive convinced even skeptics that Saddam was finally finished.

For Shites and Kurds, who hated Saddam, this offers hope that things may improve. For Sunnis, who profited from his rule, Saddam's demise must cause them to re-examine their options.

Even the famously anti-American Arab satellite network al-Jazeera changed its tune during the day of Saddam's arrest. Early footage of an Iraqi crowd cheering Saddam in April eventually gave way to scenes of Saddam's capture. My Arab sources in Cairo and Amman reported that people were gloomy because Saddam had betrayed their belief that he was a hero who could stand up to America.

Will this make Iraqi Sunnis reassess whether they have been

backing a loser, in hoping for his or at least his Baath Party's, return to power?

Some Iraqis think so. "It's a turning point," says Zuhair Humadi, an Iraqi-American activist recently returned from Baghdad. "Those Sunnis who took regime money when Saddam fell will now want to keep it" rather than pay insurgents. "They will see the war as a losing cause. Now it will be each one for himself."

Perhaps. That will depend on whether U.S. and Iraqi officials use this critical moment to woo Sunnis back into the Iraqi fold. Until now, U.S. and Iraqi officials have lacked a strategy that would separate ordinary Sunnis from the bitter-enders with blood on their hands.

In the wake of the big news, there were signs such a strategy may be in the works.

"This is the first shift toward a new policy toward Sunnis, a clear recognition that we can't wait to engage them," says one of the most thoughtful Iraqi opposition figures, Laith Kubba.

The insurgency will go on, but U.S. officials have a new chance to split the Sunni community. This would isolate the bitter-enders who still want to fight. Such a strategy will require a better plan for transferring power to Iraqis, one that persuades Sunnis they will be included.

The window is open, but not indefinitely. As Kubba says, U.S. and Iraqi leaders "would be absolutely dumb if they waste this huge new opportunity to get it right."

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer.