

quagmire of Iraq. He insisted that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological weapons and was hot on the trail of nukes. He pounded away at the false suggestion that Iraq was somehow linked to Al Qaeda. And he spread the word that the war he wanted so badly would be a cakewalk.

"I really do believe," he told Tim Russert, "that we will be greeted as liberators."

Well, he got his war. And while the nation's brave young soldiers and marines were bouncing around Iraq in shamefully vulnerable Humvees and other vehicles, dodging bullets, bombs and improvised explosive devices, Mr. Cheney (a gold-medal winner in the acquisition of wartime deferments) felt perfectly comfortable packing his fancy 28-gauge Perazzi shotgun and heading off to Texas with a covey of fat cats to shoot quail.

Matters went haywire, of course, when he shot Mr. Whittington instead.

That was the moment when the legend of the tough, hawkish, take-no-prisoners vice president began morphing into the less-than-heroic image of a reckless, scowling incompetent who mistook his buddy for a bird.

This story is never going away. Harry Whittington is Dick Cheney's Monica. When Mr. Whittington dies (hopefully many years from now, and from natural causes), he will be remembered as the hunting companion who was shot by the vice president of the United States. This tale will stick to Mr. Cheney like Krazy Glue, and that's bad news for the Bush administration.

The shooting and Mr. Cheney's highhanded behavior in its immediate aftermath fit perfectly with the stereotype of him as a powerful but dangerous figure who is viewed by many as a dark force within the administration. He doesn't even give lip service to the idea of transparency in his public or private life. This is the man who fought all the way to the Supreme Court to keep his White House meetings with energy industry honchos as secret as the Manhattan Project. (Along the way he went duck hunting at a private camp in rural Louisiana with Justice Antonin Scalia.)

This is also the man whose closest and most trusted aide, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, has been indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice as a result of the investigation into the outing of a C.I.A. undercover operative, Valerie Wilson.

Mr. Cheney is arrogant, defiant and at times blatantly vulgar. He once told Senator Patrick Leahy to perform a crude act upon himself.

A vice president who insists on writing his own rules, who shudders at the very idea of transparency in government, whose judgment on crucial policy issues has been as wildly off the mark (and infinitely more tragic) as his actions in Texas over the weekend, and who has now become an object of relentless ridicule, cannot by any reasonable measure be thought of as an asset to the nation or to the president he serves.

The Bush administration would benefit from new thinking and new perspectives on the war in Iraq, the potential threat from Iran, the nation's readiness to cope with another terror attack, the development of a comprehensive energy policy and other important issues.

President Bush's approval ratings have dropped below 40 percent in recent polls. Even Republicans are openly criticizing the administration's conduct of the war, its response to Hurricane Katrina and assorted other failures and debacles.

Dick Cheney is a constant reminder of those things the White House would most

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like to forget: the bullying, the intelligence failures, the inability to pacify Iraq, the misuse of classified information and the breathtaking incompetence that seems to be spread throughout the administration.

Mr. Cheney would do his nation and his president a service by packing his bags and heading back to Wyoming. He's become a joke. But not a funny one.

CELEBRATING THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE SAN MATEO SHERIFF'S OFFICE

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to celebrate the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department on their Sesquicentennial Anniversary. The Department is the oldest and largest law enforcement agency in San Mateo County, California, located in my Congressional District.

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Department history begins with the formation of the County of San Mateo in 1856. Residents of the Peninsula watched as John W. Ackerson was sworn in as the first sheriff of San Mateo County. He had three total staff members, an Undersheriff, bailiff of the Courts and a jailer. There weren't even patrol duties for the office.

Mr. Speaker, today, from those humble beginnings, the San Mateo Sheriff's Office has grown to a force of 450 officers and is responsible for everything from patrolling the county to running the courts and the correctional facilities. They have exemplary task forces, specializing in narcotics, regional terrorist threat assessment and emergency services among others. Today, the Sheriff's Office is still the Chief Law Enforcement Agency of the County of San Mateo.

Mr. Speaker, since 1993 the Sheriff's Office has been most ably led by Sheriff Don Horsley. In fact, Sheriff Horsley picked out the badge marking the 150th anniversary of the Sheriff's Office. The commemorative badge replicates the Old West style that Sheriff Ackerson would have worn. I dearly appreciate their extraordinary service that they provide to the County and I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the San Mateo Sheriff's Office for the honorable duty they have performed for the last 150 years.

HONORING MICHEL A. LAJOIE FIRE CHIEF, LEWISTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Chief Michel A. Lajoie of the Lewiston Fire Department. Chief Lajoie began his career as a firefighter in the Lewiston Fire Department in 1970. After taking a short break to pursue a career in the automotive industry in 1972, Michel Lajoie returned to the Lewiston

Fire Department in 1976 and rose through the ranks of lieutenant, captain, and deputy chief, before finally becoming chief in 1994. This year he retires, having served over 30 years in Lewiston.

Chief Lajoie exemplifies what it means to be a public servant. In addition to managing a department of 79 uniformed and civilian personnel, he has earned an Associate Degree in Fire Science from Southern Maine Community College and is a graduate of the Androscoggin Leadership Development Institute. Chief Lajoie is a member of a Standing Ad-Hoc Committee for the State of Maine Bureau of Labor Standards and has been instrumental in the continued review and updating of the standards and requirements governing the State of Maine's Fire Service.

His colleagues in Maine selected Chief Lajoie as Fire Chief of the Year in 2003 and also nominated him for Fire Chief of the Year in 2003 for the Fire Chiefs Magazine. Chief Lajoie has served as President of the New England Division of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, representing the fire service and the Fire Chiefs throughout the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. He also has served as President of the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, representing the fire service and Fire Chiefs throughout the State of Maine and he currently holds Board positions in several professional associations.

I am proud to honor Chief Lajoie as he embarks on a very well deserved retirement. The City of Lewiston and the State of Maine will miss him.

HONORING OPEN CITIES HEALTH CENTER

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the ground-breaking work of the Open Cities Health Center. In a fitting celebration of African American History Month, Ms. Mary Stokes and Mrs. Timothy O. Vann will be remembered and celebrated at an awards ceremony on February 24, 2006. These two pioneering African-American women founded the center, providing the vision to provide culturally competent health care—a vision that has grown into a vital resource in the Twin Cities community for nearly four decades.

The Open Cities Health Center has become one of the largest nonprofit community health centers in the Twin Cities. The center was one of the first in the State of Minnesota to focus on providing health care to low-income residents, predominantly people of color. A group of Saint Paul residents began the center in a church basement in Saint Paul's Rondo neighborhood in 1967. Stokes and Vann addressed the health needs of our most at-risk citizens when no one else would. The all-volunteer clinic started out by providing immunizations and basic health education to African-Americans.

Today, due in part to Federal and local government grants over the years, the center has