

QUID EST VERITAS

Please Bring Us Together

By Patrick Weadon

What a difference a year makes! Last December, George Bush was exhorting the nation to stay the course in Iraq and the Republican Congress, in its usual fashion, continued to pump out legislative proposals designed to please people like the Rev. Ted Haggard and Congressman Mark Foley.

My how things have changed; the November 19th edition of the *Washington Post* announced to the world that the new Congress intends to focus on issues like the minimum wage and college costs, and that most of the former advocates of the war in Iraq (including Henry Kissinger) have finally turned their backs on the President and his so called "foreign policy" team.

The bottom line is this is a good time to be a Democrat. At the same time, however, a part of me is reluctant to rejoice because I am not sure it is a good time, at least from a political perspective, to be an American. Why? Well mainly because those who hold the reigns of power in both parties appear content to continue to view every problem through a political lens.

With this in mind, it is doubtful the political sea change on Capital Hill will do anything but increase the level of acrimony between the two parties, which means both sides will likely continue to be more concerned with making the other look bad than with helping our nation grow and prosper.

You don't have to hold a PhD in political science to understand that America is sorely in need of a leader who can somehow overcome this Red State/Blue State conundrum. The question is who? The answer is certainly not Hillary Clinton, who has proven to be an effective senator but the very idea of her as President of the United States is enough to make huge numbers of Americans run screaming like lemmings into the sea. What about accomplished people like Milt Romney, John Edwards, Newt Gingrich and John Kerry? All the aforementioned have one thing in common - half the country admires them, the other half hates them. To a man, they are polarizing figures who, if they did win the White House, would only guarantee four more years of blatant partisanship and divisiveness.

There is, however, one man who, for all his faults, has the ability to change this troubling dynamic, John Sidney McCain. Many on the right hate his guts, but the fact is he has an 83 rating (that's on a scale of 100) from the American Conservative Union. Many more on the left dislike him because he



has caved in one too many times to George Bush and embraced lunatic theories like "intelligent design."

But many more people in the center (where most Americans reside) like him because, unlike so many of our politicians, he is devoid of the all-too-common "knee jerk" responses we have all grown accustomed to. He is pro-life (with exceptions for rape and incest) but at the same time is an ardent proponent of stem cell research. He is against tax increases but has also called for an increase in revenues to maintain fiscal sanity. He is adamant that something must be done to fix the immigration problem, but is, at the same time, mature enough to realize we cannot send millions of hard working immigrants back home.

Most importantly, he is a true American Hero who when offered a chance to escape the hell of the Hanoi Hilton informed his captors he would abide by the code of conduct and leave when it was his turn. His reward for choosing devotion to country over his own freedom was to be tortured within an inch of his life. As McCain himself has noted, "during this period he slept well every night in the Hanoi Hilton knowing George W. Bush was keeping the shores of Texas safe from the communist hordes."

I have been to the Hanoi Hilton; even in its present form as a museum it is a hellish place. I believe that anyone who lives through such an ordeal can never again see the world in simplistic terms. Lying in a pool of his own blood with broken limbs, devoid of hope, McCain was witness to both the very best as well as the very worst aspects of human nature. It is in situations such as these that great men acquire a brand of wisdom that allows them to transcend pettiness and partisanship.

Unfortunately, McCain's unprecedented service and sacrifice will not prevent retromingents like Karl Rove and Rush Limbaugh from trying to "swift boat" him like they did John Kerry. To the guardians of the Republican base, it does not matter if you bled for your nation on the battlefield. If you don't

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