

Daily News, The (West Bend, WI)

No Headline

By: Maersc

Published: July 26, 2000

There's at least one county resident who couldn't be happier with Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush's selection for a running mate.

John Torinus, chief executive officer, chairman of the board and owner of West Bend's Serigraph Inc., came to know Dick Cheney in the late 1960s and the two became friends.

Torinus actually wishes things were reversed.

"Let me just put it this way. I wish he were the guy running for president," he said Tuesday.

Torinus, who lives in the town of West Bend, met Cheney in Washington, D.C. in 1968 working as a Congressional Fellow. Cheney was with another congressional fellowship, and the two ended up working in the same office for about 13 months.

"We shared a couple of beers together," Torinus said with a laugh. "I knew him pretty well but I haven't seen a lot of him. I see him once every three-four years."

Bush introduced Cheney, 59, at a press conference Tuesday. Cheney's Wisconsin ties include being a staff aide to Gov. Warren Knowles in 1966 and attending the University of Wisconsin from 1966-68.

"I think he's the best this country has to offer," Torinus said. "I was working around him and I was 30 years old and I could tell he was a lot smarter than I was, a lot shrewder. This guy is a step ahead of everybody else. He's got a lot of natural ability."

Torinus mentioned experience and savvy as Cheney's strengths.

"He's worked on the public side and the private side. He knows the White House. He's a good politician ... understands politics," he said. "Lastly, he's a very nice guy."

The Persian Gulf War was a highlight as well.

"He ran Desert Storm, arguably the best-run military campaign in the history of the United States," Torinus said. "He was (Gen.) Colin Powell's boss, the brains behind it."

The only weakness Torinus could find is Cheney's health, but he said he hasn't had any problems recently.

Torinus isn't sure about the political benefits of the move, but said he does fill the experience element Bush lacks.

"He comes from Wyoming, not from a state with a lot of delegates," Torinus said.

He finds the combination of the two as a positive, however.

"He knows how to lead and be an executive," Torinus said. "I think they'll be a nice complement to each other."

Torinus is also impressed with Cheney's wife, Lynne, who he said is "extremely sharp." She coauthored a

book with Cheney in 1996 called "Kings of the Hill: How Nine Powerful Men Changed the Course of American History," and has written two novels. She has her doctorate in English with specialization in 19th century British literature from the University of Wisconsin.

"She will be a tremendous asset to him, of course, the ticket and the country."

Torinus will always remember one informal meeting with Cheney. After not seeing Cheney for 10 years, he attended a press conference in Milwaukee while Cheney was secretary of defense under the George Bush administration.

"He was about a third of the way through (the conference)," Torinus said. "All of a sudden he stopped talking and looked up. 'Hi John.' It was very flattering."

Copyright, 2000, 2004, Lakeshore Newspapers, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

[Accessed via <http://www.gmtoday>, 10/27/2008]