Capture the Moment
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Following the weekend capture of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, or as Democratic Party insiders call it, "The day the music died," reaction continues to pour in. It was, after all, a story that took so many by surprise that it was several milliseconds before TV commentators could recover and note that Osama bin Laden is allegedly still at large.

Most profoundly affected was candidate Howard Dean, scheduled on Monday to make a major foreign policy speech that would be highly critical of the Bush administration. Late Sunday, Dean traveled to a Middlesex, Vermont warehouse to add the original Iraq section of his speech to the 500,000 pages of records from Dean's governorship, which he's sealed for a period of ten years. Billed as a follow-up to his "Sleepless Summer Tour," Dean spoke briefly during this "Withholding Information Winter Tour."

"It's important for the American people to know where I once stood on this important issue before I was overtaken by certain recent events," Dean said, ceremoniously adding several sheets of paper to a cardboard box of files and securely taping down the lid, "And they will know, just as soon as January 10, 2013 rolls around."

Dean then hurried back to campaign headquarters for an all-night session with his advisers. The difficult task before Monday's speech was to come up with a verbal gaffe to equal Dean's infamous judgment about Saddam's removal from power: "We've gotten rid of him and I suppose that's a good thing" or his insistence that "it's not our place to take sides" between Israel and the Palestinians. Coming up with what's known within the campaign as a Morally Blinkered Dean Assessment (MBDA), or as it's pronounced, "mib-dah," is no mean feat. By around midnight, contenders included, "Mass murderer, schmass schmurderer" and "Well, we got him but now what's important is getting him a decent barber."

Whether the ill-conceived formulation would be ready to be included in Monday's extended rant was anyone's guess as the night wore on. Said one exasperated Dean adviser, "One of history's most brutal despots is in chains, so now it's up to us to try and put the best possible face on it."

As dawn broke, it was decided Dean would say that the capture of Saddam had changed nothing, which is always true of events that deliver millions from the yoke of oppression and set free people everywhere rejoicing. For their part, Dean supporters posting messages on the campaign website were in a deep funk. Saddam's unkempt appearance and the fact he was described as "very disoriented" gave most the feeling he was, in many ways, one of their own.

Reaction from the other Democratic hopefuls was varied. Asked if he'd heard that Saddam was trying to survive in a deep hole of his own making, an unusually candid John Kerry shot back, "Heard about it? My campaign is living it!" A call to Lieberman campaign headquarters resulted in this from a spokesman: "We understand that Saddam Hussein was betrayed by one of those closest to him. Boy, that Al Gore really gets around." As for Mr. Gore himself, who last week came out in favor of President Bush's policy of preemption but only in the case of candidates who don't suck up to him sufficiently, this reporter was unable to reach the former vice president to ask why it is that megalomaniacal losers, in recent years, have tended to grow unsightly beards.

Gore, who reportedly helped write Dean's foreign policy speech, also received some bad news as the campaign decided to drop the section where Dean would claim to have invented the U.N.

But despite the weekend's events, for U.S. forces the search for the accomplices who helped keep Saddam in power continues. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder is said to be on the run with coalition forces in hot pursuit while reports say that several armored infantry divisions have surrounded French President Jacques Chirac's private residence.

And perhaps the most notable of the day's reactions came from the deposed dictator himself, just minutes after he was apprehended. A defiant Saddam confronted his U.S. captors, saying, "I'm not worried. My sons will get me out of this. I wouldn't be surprised if they're coming to my rescue this very minute. What's everybody looking at?"