

DICK'S BIG STICK AND THE DEMOCRATIC ALPHA MALE

Well, darnit. I got forwarded the Lizza column and assumed it was recent. It's not. So Lizza should not remember the Cheney comment, because it happened after Lizza's column. I apologize to Lizza, but not that the manly men Dingell and Murtha were, in fact, in Congress already when Lizza wrote the column.

Ryan Lizza must have forgotten that Dick Cheney insinuated Nancy Pelosi had emasculated John Murtha and John Dingell.

Cheney, in an interview with Politico, said Murtha (Pa.) and Dingell (Mich.), two of the most powerful House Democrats, "march to the tune of Nancy Pelosi," adding that "they are not carrying the big sticks I would have expected."

That's because Lizza has discovered, as if it were new, the Democratic Alpha Male.

The members of this new faction, which helped the Democrats expand into majority status, stand out not for their ideology or racial background but for their carefully cultivated masculinity.

"As much as the policy positions is the background and character of these Democrats," says John Lapp, the former executive director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee who helped recruit this new breed of candidate. "So we went to C.I.A. agents, F.B.I. agents, N.F.L. quarterbacks, sheriffs, Iraq war vets. These are red-blooded Americans who are tough."

Mr. Lapp even coined a term to describe these manly – and they are all men –

pols: "the Macho Dems."

The return of Democratic manliness was no accident; it was a carefully planned strategy. But now that the Macho Dems are walking the halls of Congress, it remains to be seen whether they will create as many problems for Democrats as they solved. After all, these new Democrats have heterodox political views that could complicate Democratic caucus politics, and their success may raise uncomfortable questions for those Democrats who don't pass the new macho test.

Call me crazy, but to suggest that John Murtha isn't a manly man is as much a slight to his long-term service in the Marines as when Mean Jean called Murtha a coward. And one of the biggest reasons why I have John Dingell representing me in the House, rather than Lynn Rivers, is because Dingell is a hunter's hunter—a better shot than Dick Cheney, I'd wager.

Somehow, these two manly men have survived—even flourished—in the House for a combined eighty-five years. Yet Lizza would have you believe the Democratic Alpha Male is a recent fad.