

## CORALVILLE IS A WIMPY NAME FOR A TOWN

2021 Update: This column from 5-29-97 ended up being the most controversial piece I ever wrote, and spawned two additional columns essentially saying, "forget the whole thing."

Let's rename Coralville.

But first, let me say I like Coralville. I work every day in Coralville. It is a dynamic, friendly and progressive town. But I hate the name.

I know, the name is quaint, it's descriptive, it has history. But I don't think it conveys the right impression to people who have never heard of it before. Every time I talk to someone on the phone long-distance who wants to know what city I'm in, the word "Coralville" sticks in my throat. When I say it, I'm convinced the person on the other end of the line is getting the same mental image as if I was saying "Hooterville." (You may remember that as being the hick-filled tiny rural town in the 1965-1971 TV show Green Acres starring Eddie Albert and Eva Gabor).

To get a feel for how "Coralville" must sound to people hearing it for the first time, try substituting the name of something similar for the word "Coral." Tell someone you're from Rockville or Fossilville and you get the idea.

More specifically, it's the "ville" that sounds smallish. Consider some other feebly-named Iowa towns: Spillville, Conesville, Maysville and Braddyville - it's hard to take them seriously. Of course, Coralville can at least be thankful it doesn't have a whistle-stop name like Lone Tree, Edna, What Cheer, Pisgah or Grundy Center. I have an amusing mental image of the head Grundy in Grundy Center, sitting on his front porch in his Grundywear, sipping a Grundyrita.

Anyway, my point is - how could any business located in a town with a one-horse name like Coralville be initially perceived as anything but one-horse itself? That's why when I'm on the phone with someone out of state, I usually identify my business as being in Iowa City; a dull name itself, but descriptive. There is often some vague recognition on the listener's part, and it's also unnecessary - usually - to tell them which state I'm in.

But when they want to send me some information and they ask, "What's your address there in Iowa City?," I start to mumble-mouth. I say, "Well, uh, I'm not actually in Iowa City, I'm in kind of... well... a suburb called, uh, Coralville." "What?" they say, "Coalville? Carolville?" Next, I find myself spelling "C-O-R-A-L...", fighting the temptation to say, "H-O-O-T-E-R..."

I recommend we rename the city. Additional support for this idea lies in a 1972 WWII TV-movie - coincidentally another Eddie Albert vehicle - in which he is the new Army commander of a misfit forward command post called "Easy Forward." The first thing he does is change the name to "Fireball Forward," and the next thing you know his platoon has captured Berlin. Perception and self-image are important.

First of all, we should get rid of the "ville." Even Coral City is better than Coralville (Coral Gables is already taken). Better yet, change the fossil to some more substantial rock like Granite or Marble. Even Limestone would be an improvement, and a little more logical. Or trash the rocks theme altogether and start with a clean slate (so to speak).

Since a lot of the good city names in Iowa are already taken, I figure we can find one we like and offer to trade names with the current residents (supplemented with monetary compensation, of course). A cursory review of the Iowa Transportation Map yields some unique, respect-engendering names like Gravity, Defiance, Thor, Soldier and Manly. For \$10,000 they might be willing to trade.

Or we can consider some unused but dynamic names such as Inertia, Velocity, or Force. Eddie Albert might recommend "Fireball City."

Of course, any time you mess with tradition there is going to be trouble, so I'm spreading the blame by sponsoring a contest, the winner of which gets a \$10 shopping spree in beautiful downtown (coming soon) Coralville (soon-to-be formerly known as). Send your entries marked CROWN - Coralvillians for Replacing Our Wimpy Name - to me in care of this paper.