Joseph L. Eisendrath on Lincoln Myths, Friday, June 11

It may be recalled that at our February meeting one of those always unanticipated crises occurred. Our speaker, coming from no further away than Milwaukee by scheduled bus, ran into dense fog, a chain reaction of 15 accidents, closed highway, detours, and the slow. As time for the talk arrived President Dan Lapinski pressed into service as backup speaker former president Joseph L. Eisendrath, who got fairly well launched into the outline of his talk, when our scheduled speaker, Harry H. Anderson, arrived.

All of this sounded so good as it had gone that it was determined that we must hear the rest of it at the first opportunity, with or without crisis, disaster, hell, or high water. Accordingly Joe Eisendrath is our scheduled speaker for the meeting of Friday, June 11, 1971, at the Chicago Bar Association; his topic, “The Lincoln Myths.”

Joe has rounded up some twenty-five myths relating to Lincoln, all subjects of frequent debate and discussion. Few will have missed hearing of that concerning Ann Rutledge of New Salem. There are others about his home life and wife Mary Todd, his many defeats, his box score as lawyer, his changing religious views—or did they change? Was he shrewd politician or “Honest Abe”? What are the true facts on his voice and appearance? What is really known about his wrestling match with Duff Armstrong? How did he get to be President? Was he a complete unknown—he had served only one term in Congress? Did he write the Gettysburg Address on the train? What are the facts in the Widow Bixby letter? What is the box score of soldiers saved from death in Lincoln’s review of courts martial? Was he an angry man? Melancholy? Was he a follower of spiritualism? Did he have forebodings of disaster? Did he tell dirty stories? To what degree was he military leader? Did most of his fame come after death?

Joe should have a lot to talk about—and give us much to argue about.

Joseph L. Eisendrath was born June 12, 1908. (If he talks long enough we can sing “Happy Birthday.”) His wife was Gladys Rothfels; they have two sons and five grandchildren. His home is in Highland Park. He received his Ph.B. degree at the University of Chicago in 1929.

He has been active in the Boy Scouts for more than 25 years; is a member of the National Council and holder of the Silver Beaver award. Joe has national reputation as a philatelist. He has been a stamp collector for more than 50 years. He is past president of the American Air Mail Society and has served other philatelic groups. He is at present editor in chief of The American Air Mail Catalogue. He has written many articles on philatelic subjects.

Joe writes that he has been interested in Lincoln and the Civil War since 1941 and has been a member of CWRT since early 1942. He was president of CWRT 1949-50. He says he has “a good working library on Lincoln and has authored many Lincoln and Civil War articles. Biggest honor was footnoter and researcher for Otto Eisenbichl. (He wanted me to do a book with him.)”

Professionally Joe Eisendrath is head of Banthrico, Inc., manufacturers of coin banks and die castings. He has engaged in numerous civic activities, and admits to being a lousy golfer.

KROLICK ELECTED

Marshall Krolick was elected president of The Civil War Round Table for 1971-72 at the annual meeting May 14. Other officers chosen were: senior vice president, Charles Falkenberg; vice presidents, Henry Kennedy and Elmer Pendavis; secretary, Gordon Whitney; treasurer, Charles Wesselhoeft; assistant treasurer, Don Jensen. Elected to the Board of Directors were Richard Cohen, George Fleming, and Don Sikorski.
109 years later. But we learned a few valuable things.

Item: Sheridan wasn’t “twenty miles away,” as the poem says, when he rode from Winchester to Cedar Creek, to stem the good guys’ retreat. It was about eleven and a half miles.

Item: At Port Royal, where Jackson did a Muhammad Ali (i.e., “float like a butterfly, sting like a bee”), there’s a Bing Crosby Stadium today. None of the guides could explain why.

Item: A recent wire service story to the newspapers said there’s a barber in Harrisonburg, Va., who is more than 90 years old, and stubbornly refuses to raise the rates on haircuts. The story said the torsorial operation remains where it was when he went into business some 60 years ago—at about 25 or 30 cents. No one on the tour could flush this admirable citizen, Harrisonburg papers please copy.

Item: One of the tourists, sound asleep in a motel near Winchester, was wakened by a pounding on his door, and thought for a moment the end of the world was at hand. But it seems there are fireworks for sale in the Shenandoah Valley, and his buddies from Chicago were lighting a series of sparklers and stuffing them thru the keyhole, one after another.

Long ago, before we left Chicago, we had ascertained that eventually, the federal government defeated the Confederacy. Somehow, that was reassuring, last week between the Appalachians and the Blue Ridge.

REPORTS OF PROGRESS.

We have recent letters from recipients of Civil War Round Table fellowships. Thomas Schoonover writes from the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette:

Under separate cover I am sending you a copy of my dissertation, written with the generous assistance of your Fellowship for the year 1968-1969. I wish once again to thank the whole Chicago Round Table for their help; perhaps you could do that for me at your next meeting.

I would also like to explain why I am so late in sending you your copy. Since last summer I have been engaged in revising the dissertation to publish it as a book. Having only my own copy to mail to various readers around the country, I decided to hold your copy as temporary insurance that my copy would not get lost or misplaced. The revision is completed and I hope within 6 months to inform you that your Fellowship has contributed toward the publication of a book.

Richard Winslow, The Pennsylvania State University, The Delaware Campus, Media, writes:

It has been a real honor and a source of both personal and professional pride to be the recipient of the Fellowship Award.

A full academic teaching load has greatly hampered my actual work on my study of John Sedgwick, but not my interest and enthusiasm for bringing this project to eventual completion. I have searched very long and hard for a publisher. After fourteen rejections, the University of Alabama Press notified me in February about its interest. During the term break, I talked with Mr. Travis, the press’s editor in Tuscaloosa, and am happy to report that he has consented verbally to publish my study, subject to revisions and additional chapters. Dr. Warren W. Hassler, the supervisor of my dissertation at Penn State, has agreed to help me in fleshing out the study into a full-dress biography, as well as writing an introduction to the book. I have a teaching commitment for the forthcoming academic year, but have made fairly definite plans to devote my full time and attention for a year (June, 1972-June 1973) to finish the manuscript for publication.

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Senators Charles Mathias and J. Glenn Beall, Republicans, Maryland, have introduced a bill to repay a $200,000 ransom paid by the city fathers of Frederick to Gen. Jubal A. Early in 1864. They seem to have a point in that it was 1951 before the city finished paying off the banks, as had been agreed 87 years before. However the senators’ bill seeks interest at 4 per cent compounded annually, figured out as $6,066,392.62. That seems excessive, even for Jubal Early.
TO THE LADIES—

Mrs. Eleanor Smith was elected president of the Camp Followers for 1971-72 at the May 14 meeting. A long and faithful member of the group, she will take charge of programs for the ensuing year. Meanwhile—

The Program: “The Sisters,” that thrilling, romantic tragedy, conceived, dedicated, and written in the style of the 1860’s by Joyce Warshaw, will return to the scene of its first great triumph after a successful tour of the provinces. The talented thespians who present this unforgettable play are Joyce Warshaw, Lenore Fleming, and George Fleming.

The Time: Friday, June 11, 1971
The Place: The Book and Bottle, 17 East Chestnut Street, directly across the street from the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop.
And the Girl to call for reservations is Joyce Warshaw, 1319 Crane Street, Evanston, Ill. 60602; phone 866-6667.

Last Meeting: Charles Wesselhoft performed superbly in instructing the ladies on railroads in the Civil War, their operating problems in wartime, and their importance in strategy. He successfully fielded many questions concerning the role of the roads in wartime. In the absence of Margaret April trouble developed with the security system at the close of the meeting, by which it seemed to be possible to move anywhere but out. Eventually Dick Clark rode to the rescue with a horseshoe nail without which the battle had been lost, in the form of a key, and all escaped without loot.

Long-time CWRT member Robert L. Huttner has ended a long hospital siege and is reported recuperating in the Carlton Convalescent home, 725 West Montrose Avenue, where he would be glad to hear from old friends.

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CWRT member Charles Bormstine suffered an operation in Presbyterian-St. Lukes Hospital early in May. He is currently commander of the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Association of Cook County, Illinois

HELP WANTED

I would sincerely appreciate the assistance of members in obtaining information to be used in connection with a doctoral dissertation. My dissertation pertains to the Union bands of the Civil War with emphasis on those bands which remained in after the issuance of General Order #91 in July of 1862. Information prior to that time would, however, be useful.

My interests are concerned with securing photographs, letters, diaries, concert programs, newspaper clippings, muster rosters, or any other materials pertaining to Union bands. Additional information such as regimental histories, with references to bands, would also be highly desirable. Foremost among wanted items are manuscript books actually used by Union musicians and instruments in private hands or collections.

My research excludes drum calls, bugle calls, navy bands, and sheet music (unless it refers to the bands).

I would be pleased to swap materials with anyone having like interests. Other suggestions of possible sources would be most welcome.

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ANTITAEAM LOOKING DOWN THE LANE, This photo was taken by James R. Atkinson, Park Historian, Antietam NBS at the same location as the quiz picture shown in the April CWRT Bulletin. The photo picture apparently was taken before 1890 when the War Department took over the battlefield and rebuilt the road as seen above. Further details are given in Mr. Atkinson’s accompanying letter.


