RALPH G. NEWMAN ON ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FUNERAL

On May 9, 1975 it will be our extreme pleasure to welcome back to the speaker’s chair Ye Olde Proprietor of the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, our founder, Ralph G. Newman. It would probably be a monumental task to tally the number of times Ralph has addressed the Round Table, but each occasion has been marked by the scholarship, wit and unique speaking ability that only Ralph can blend so well. The topic he has chosen for us this time is “The Last Full Measure of Devotion: The Moving, Incredible, Confusing Story of the Funeral of Abraham Lincoln”.

The funeral proceedings lasted for nineteen days. They were days of deep mourning, dirges, muffled drums, torchlight vigils, pageantry in dreadful bad taste and genuine sorrow. There were many processions and in keeping with the mood of the people, the weather was frequently rainy. During that time the funeral train traveled nearly seventeen hundred miles in taking the martyred President’s body from the White House to Springfield, Illinois. The body was removed from the train to a public building or to a specially built structure for viewing at ten of the cities along the route. A million and a half Americans gazed upon the face of the Sixteenth President and more than seven million saw the train or one of the hearses pass by. Some cynics say that the memory of that funeral elected Republican Presidents for the next twenty years. It was such a funeral as the country had not seen before or since — the late Lloyd Lewis characterized it as “half circus, half heartbreak”.

For many years Ralph has been fascinated by the strange blend of the ridiculous and the sublime that marked the dramatic days of a hundred and ten years ago. It began with the moment of his death and ended on the morning of Thursday, May 4, 1865, when his friends and neighbors walked behind Lincoln’s coffin to a vault in Oak Ridge Cemetery on the north edge of Springfield.

In preparing for his talk to us, Ralph has even threatened to set a terrible precedent and resort to poetry. In discussing this possible break with tradition, he says, “Poetry cannot be considered great unless it’s compared to that of Lowell Reidenbaugh or Verlyn Sprague. I only ‘committed’ poetry once in my life for public consumption and it was featured in a national television broadcast. I decided to retire ‘undefeated’ and not write anything else in that form — I figured that Carl Sandburg, Paul Horgan and others covered the field with more skill and grace than I could ever hope to acquire. Since my so-called poetry was about the Lincoln funeral I may, if time permits, inflict a bit of it on the audience. On the other hand, if this starts a rash of verbal assaults, I may decide that this is too awesome and terrifying a fate with which to threaten future Round Tables.”

Describing the accomplishments of Ralph G. Newman to the Civil War Round Table of Chicago can only be compared to telling the Army of Northern Virginia about Robert E. Lee. That we know what he has achieved and respect and honor him for those achievements is best illustrated by his selection as the recipient of the Nevins-Freeman Award. This highest salutation which the Round Table has within its power to bestow will be presented to Ralph during gala ceremonies on June 13, 1975. For this reason, we shall reserve the detailing of his brilliant career for next month’s Newsletter. Suffice it to say that without his leading the way there may not have been a Round Table, either here in Chicago or in almost ninety other locations around the world.
plishment will not resolve the nationwide problem that has become equally as serious as battlefield preservation. We are referring, of course, to the continued desecration of historical monuments of various types. The situation at the Hancock tomb is but one example of this cancer which has spread across our country. The condition of statues, roadside markers, commemorative plaques and similar items has become a blemish upon the land. How appropriate is the hackneyed question “Is nothing sacred anymore?”

One can only wonder what is it in our society which causes this destruction of these innocent reminders of our national heritage. Can it be that there is within some elements of our citizenry a feeling of national self-hatred which manifests itself in the defacing of the evidence of our past? Or is it our own failure to educate our young to reverence and respect the ideals which brought forth the people and events honored by these bits of stone and metal? What perverse pleasure can be derived by breaking off the sword of a marble horseman or smearing graffiti across the abdomen of a bronze statesman?

But before we lay all the blame at the feet of the midnight vandals, we must recognize that he is not the only culprit. Desecration is a tree with two roots which feeds equally as much on neglect as on the intended act. Does a statue splashed with blue paint look any worse than one turned moldy green by the absence of the refinisher’s touch? Is a grave with its headstone overturned any less presentable than its neighbor which is covered by a two-year growth of weeds? And so we must indict not only he who intends to do harm, but also each other, for we who say we care have not cared enough.

What better time than now, as our nation enters upon its bi-centennial, to correct this mistreatment of those signposts which mark the course of our country’s history. Their condition and the concern which maintains their preservation should be the symbols of our national pride. Every student of history who has seen the battlefields eroded and has asked “What can I do?” now has his answer. The only requirement is a donation, not of money, but of time. Each individual, each Round Table should look around and find the general’s grave, the cannon in the square, the roadside marker. They’re there, and almost all of them need your attention with the scrub brush and the cleaning rag. Let’s get together to make this country shine so that those who come behind us can read and see what those who came ahead of us did. Maybe then reverence will replace destruction, care replace neglect. Its certainly worth a try.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT
At the April meeting, past-president Arnold Alexander, chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced recommendations regarding the election of officers for the 1975-1976 year. The proposed slate is as follows:

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<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Gerald M. Edelstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Vice President</td>
<td>Terry Carr</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Richard E. Clark</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Charles D. Wesselhoeft</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
<td>William J. Sullivan</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Myron Cohn</td>
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<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Robert A. Bernant</td>
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<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Irwin Levin</td>
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<td>Trustee</td>
<td>Robert G. Walter</td>
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<td>Trustee</td>
<td>Glen N. Wiche</td>
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<td>Trustee</td>
<td>John F. Scapin</td>
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<td>Trustee</td>
<td>Edward J. Williams</td>
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The election will be held during the May meeting, at which time additional nominations for any of the above offices may be made from the floor. Installation of the new officers will be part of the program at the Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner on June 13th. Four current members of the Board of Trustees, Donald E. Jensen, Jack D. Kahuf, Allen Meyer, and G. Paul Doucette, will remain in office for the coming year as they complete their two-year terms.
APRIL MEETING

Not only is he one of the liveliest speakers in the Civil War field, but, as President Ward Smidt informed us, Colonel Harold Simpson may also still hold the tree sitting record in his old Chicago neighborhood. The reunion between Ward and Colonel Simpson, who were boyhood friends, was just one of the highlights of the evening as seventy-eight members and guests gathered on April 11, 1975. The Colonel's remarks were preceded by several important announcements, including final details of the forthcoming Battlefield Tour and the report of the Nominating Committee.

With the business matters concluded, everyone settled back to enjoy a spirited description of the career of Hood's Texas Brigade. This storied unit, which had its beginnings in militia companies from across the Lone Star State, was in the main comprised of the only Texans to serve in the Army of Northern Virginia. Initially formed on November 1, 1861 at Dumarct, Virginia, the basic core of the brigade was three Texas regiments, the First, Fourth and Fifth. Before 1861 had ended, the Eighteenth Georgia had been added to the roster and, just after the Battle of Seven Pines in the spring of 1862, eight companies of South Carolina's Hampton Legion became part of the brigade. These eastern units fought side by side with the Texans through the bloody campaigns of The Peninsula, Second Bull Run and Antietam. When they were reassigned in the fall of 1862, the brigade was brought up to its required complement of four regiments by the assignment to it of the Third Arkansas. The Texans and Razorbacks would fight and bleed together for the remaining two and one-half years of the war.

The brigade, a part of Longstreet's Corps, took the field for every battle of the Army of Northern Virginia, except Chancellorsville, and also followed "Old Pete" to Suffolk, Knoxville and Chickamauga. Its casualty lists in these battles were consistently among the highest in the Confederate army. At Gaines's Mill, Second Bull Run and Antietam, the five regiments suffered a combined loss of 1,760. In the bloody combat of Miller's Cornfield on September 17, 1862, 92.3 percent of the men of the First Texas became casualties. This was the greatest one-day loss suffered by any regiment in either army. Altogether, of the approximate 4,500 men to serve during the war in the three Texas regiments, only 476 were left in the ranks to surrender at Appomattox.

However, there was a lighter side to even the hardest of the brigade's campaigns. After the famous "roasting ears" battle against the troops of Franz Sigel, the brigade quartermaster paid for the green corn confiscated by the soldiers, only to see the Texans forced out of action for the next ten days as a result of an attack of the "Virginia Quickstep". The great snowball fight of January, 1863 began within the brigade and eventually involved over 5,000 Confederate troops, all marching and fighting as if in an actual battle. The casualties unfortunately suffered as a result of this entertainment compelled Lee to issue an order prohibiting further snowballing. While the brigade was en route to Gettysburg on June 27, 1863, a liquor ration was made available which produced a complete state of intoxication. As Colonel Simpson put it, this was their fourth "state" of the memorable day. The brigade had eaten breakfast in Virginia, lunch in Maryland, and dinner in Pennsylvania.

The brigade's veteran's association was formed in Houston in 1877. It was to become one of the most active and honored groups of its type, holding annual meetings into the 1930's. General Robertson, who had led the brigade at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, served eleven terms as association president, far more than anyone else. The last survivor of the gallant Texans, Lieutenant Bolling Eldridge of the Fifth Texas, passed away on October 29, 1938. With his death, our last actual connection with the Texas Brigade was broken. However, its legend will go on as long as the Civil War is studied, for its record of bravery and dedication can never die.

TO THE CAMPFOLLOWERS (LADIES)

Our April meeting was a tremendous success as a large number of Campfollowers turned out to hear Ralph Newman speak on "What Was Abraham Lincoln Really Like?" Of the many things we learned, one of the most surprising was that Lincoln had been what might be considered a 19th century juvenile delinquent. Just as most of today's teenagers do, however, he outgrew his youthful hippie behavior and through diligent study (he was known to have read Euclid while riding the Illinois circuit), he matured into the powerful figure who led us through one of the bloodiest periods in our country's history. Mr. Newman pointed out that although Lincoln was a brilliant politician and an exceptional leader of his day, his simplicity in speech and manner made what he said and did much more remembered than the noble words of many of our most eminent forefathers.

At our May meeting, Dan Weinberg is scheduled to talk on Andrew Johnson and Impeachment. Dan has done extensive work in the field of our American presidents, so his program on Johnson should be quite an education. Try to be with us. The meeting will be at the Rock and Bottle, 17 E. Chestnut, at 5:30 P.M. on May 9th. For reservations, write or call Mary Ellen Wehler, 244 S. Elmwood, Aurora, Illinois 60506, Phone 896-0169.

The SUTLER'S WAGON

WANTED: To borrow, rent or buy a copy of "They Were There" written by Philip Van Dorn Stern in 1959. Contact Edward C. Johnson, 813 W. Diversey, Chicago, Illinois 60614, GR 2-5031.

NEVINS-FREEMAN AWARD DINNER

Award Presentation Honoring Ralph G. Newman
Installation of Officers; Gala Entertainment
Ladies Welcome!
G.A.R. Room, Chicago Public Library
June 13, 1975

The National Historical Society is sponsoring a tour of Gettysburg, Harper's Ferry, South Mountain and Antietam May 10-12, 1975. In addition to actual battlefield visits, group discussions and lectures have been planned. The price of the tour, including meals, lodging, battlefield transportation, etc. is one hundred twenty-five dollars per person. For Information, contact the Society at 206 Hanover Street, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325.

The Kansas City Civil War Round Table has announced that the 1975 recipient of their prestigious Harry S. Truman Award was Dr. Warren W. Hassler, Jr., Professor of American History at Penn State University. Dr. Hassler, who is probably the foremost authority on the career of Major General George B. McClellan, has authored many fine books on military subjects, among which is a biography of "Little Mac". The Truman Award was presented to him in Kansas City on March 25th.
THE NEW BOOKS

(Compiled by Dick Clark)


FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular Meetings are held at the Chicago Bar Association, 29 South LaSalle, second Friday in each month except as noted.

April 30, May 1-4: Annual Battlefield Tour to Richmond. May 9: Ralph G. Newman on "The Last Full Measure of Devotion — Abraham Lincoln's Incredible Funeral."


September 12: Wiley Sword on "The Battle of Shiloh."

October 10: Dr. Alfred C. Raphelson on "The Career of General Alexander Schimmelfennig."

November 14: Tour of the new Civil War Exhibit at the Chicago Historical Society.

December 12: Dr. Harry Pflanz on "The First Day at Gettysburg."


Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at LaSalle Hotel Coffee Shop; all members welcome.

NEW MEMBERS


Hamilton Pitt, 2250 N. Lincoln, #304, Chicago, Illinois 60614.

Ask". Salt Creek was founded in 1962 and continues to prosper, presenting fine programs for its over fifty members. Its meetings are held on the third Friday of each month in the Glen Ellyn Public Library.

Several works of art, including a famous oil painting of Mary Todd Lincoln by her niece, Kathryn Helm, an oil of Lincoln, death and life masks of the 16th President, a cast of Lincoln's hand, and a Rogers sculpture, "The Council of War", have been stolen from the home of Judge William Townsend in Lexington, Kentucky. Any information concerning the whereabouts of these valuable items may be communicated to the judge's daughter, Mrs. Joseph Murphy, Helm Place, Bowman's Mill Road, R.R. #1, Lexington, Ky. 40503.

The eighty-first general convention of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the thirty-eighth annual meeting of the Order of the Stars and Bars will be jointly held in Alexandria, Virginia on August 14-16, 1975. For information, contact William D. McCain, Adjutant-in-Chief, Southern Station, Box 1, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401. The organizations have established the Whte Scholarship Fund in honor of the Cherokee chief who became a Confederate general. Contributions to the fund will be utilized to further the education of children of Cherokee descent at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma.