

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS -- THE LINCOLN WEEK

While I was thinking about this report to you I thought of a title. I said I ought to call this "That Was The Week That Was -- The Lincoln Week." Of course it's not like that program you used to see sometime back, that rather comic program, "That Was The Week That Was." But I'm referring to my visit back home last week because in my book that was the week that was and it was stuffed with a good deal of experience.

Before leaving Washington I had a chance, along with some of my associates in the House and Senate, to set a wreath at the base of that great sitting figure of Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in the Nation's Capital. It's a magnificent piece of work and in the south wall is engraved in marble the imperishable Gettysburg Address, and in the north wall also in marble is the entire Second Inaugural Address of Lincoln. So the spirit became inspired right there, and I've often said you cannot go to that Memorial because it's so spacious and stand there or sit there for as much as a half hour without becoming fully aware of the brooding and the hovering presence of Abraham Lincoln.

So I had that experience in that week and then came out home where we had the annual pilgrimage to the Tomb. That also was an inspirational experience. There are so many bronzes there showing of Lincoln at various stages in his life and each one has great significance. But you can't stand in that Tomb and think about him without becoming aware of that presence.

I think it was the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Hebrews who said about Abel in his efforts to gain righteousness, being dead, yet speaketh, and to me Lincoln is like that. Dead, he is physically dead, physical disillusion, but he still speaks, and

he still speaks to the people. And so for a good many days it was my privilege to visit with home folks at Monmouth, at Springfield, at Champaign, at Pekin, Waukegan, and elsewhere and enter into that great confraternity of spirit with them and to me it is a lifting experience to say the least.

And then of course there was another experience that touched me very deeply. I went to the U. S. Navy Hospital at Great Lakes, and I went there for a purpose because there are boys from Vietnam there. I spent several hours and everybody was very kind in making that as pleasant a trip as it could be under the circumstances. You know you need only to go to the hospital to see war, and I saw the whole Vietnam war as if it were bright and brilliant before me just by being in the association and in the company of those youngsters with their lacerated flesh and their bruised bodies. You see, they've been evacuated back from Vietnam. They could be enlisted men, they could have been drafted, it doesn't make too much difference, they've come from somewhere whether here or in the Philippines and then right on to where the business really was in Vietnam.

What disturbed me so much, of course, was the nature of their wounds. So many of them had leg wounds and hand wounds. Those were the results of these little land mines and when a soldier steps on one and they're covered up a little, then comes the detonation, then comes iron and steel just flying apart, and imbedding itself in the flesh, and that's a terrible thing. We've been very, very efficient, however, about our evacuation of these youngsters. You see when something happens they get first aid immediately, and then aboard a plane, and that'll probably fly them to Travis Air Force Base, and from there to Scott Field at Belleville, Illinois, and from there they fan them out depending on where they live. If they live in the middle west, Great Lakes and the U. S. Navy Hospital is the place really. If they get down this way we

put a good many of them in Walter Reed Hospital here in Washington, and there of course they are close to home folks and the home folks can see them rather readily.

It was so efficiently done, it's a modern hospital and a modern facility at Great Lakes. There isn't anything you could add, and we have very competent officers and surgeons and doctors. There was a peculiar compassion about the nurses there and then I watched these alert young corps men as they went up and down these aisles of wounded in the different wars to look after their every want and their every desire. I thought of their insufferable hands and it brought back a little of the spirit of Lincoln, cause you remember in his Second Inaugural he spoke about binding up the Nation's wounds and caring for him who has born the battle, his widow and his orphan. That's what we're doing. Sometimes they get them over from there within a space of 72 hours. Sometimes it takes a little longer. But they get them here quickly and then they get all the care that a grateful and solicitous government can provide for them. I thought it was a marvelous thing, and I was glad we were so adequately tooled to do that for them because of what they paid in the form of blood and pain.

Now who are these boys who have been coming back home. They come from every walk of life, every activity, youngsters from the farms, from the shops, from the factories, most of them quite young. You know, it was something to sit there on the bed of one of these young soldiers and to say to him, sonny, how old are you? I'm 20, I'm 19, I'm 18. I found one, a young Dane, his name was Jorgen as I recall, who was only 17, in the Marines. I said, how'd you get in there so quickly, evidently they didn't have an accurate record of your age, where did they stage you and train you? Well in the Philippines. Here you are 17 years old, you've been over there, you've been in battle, and already here you're back among the casualties of war. I said, you've done your stint and I presume now you'll be going about with some line of business or activity

as soon as you're whole in body. Oh, oh no, he said, not me. I want to go back over there and help finish the job. I just couldn't help but marvel about their morale and the spirit that they manifest.

But getting back again to these wounds, that's an astounding thing to go through those jungles, you set on a little bunch of twigs, or something that's covered up by grass and bang, there's a land mine, shatters a leg, sometimes a hand, an arm, or even waist high, but that type of wound was preponderant I thought and then I expressed the hope that they wouldn't be impaired in body some time later. And I had every assurance because of the therapy that they employ there that their hands would be quite usable again and likewise the legs. Oh, that's a consummation of convalescence that is so devoutly wished for that it doesn't leave a durable, some kind of impairment with which they've got to live year in and year out with.

I said, where did you get hit, DaNang. I said where were you wounded, QuangNgai I said where did you get hit, at DaLat. And then suddenly these towns over there with funny names, they weren't funny any longer, they just took on life, they were no longer just names on a map that you could hardly pronounce. No, they were places where our youngsters fought and where they were hurt and wounded and from whence we had to rescue them and bring them back over here. And when I thought of their age, I said, you know sonny, it's an old soldier talking to a young soldier.

Then I thought about my own day on a western front in World War I in the Saint Mihiel sector, lying on that last day on November 11 in a trench with a tin derby on and a gas mask over my nose as a last barrage of mustard gas or chlorine gas came over. I thought, goodness me, that was way back in nineteen hundred and seventeen and eighteen, that's 47, 48 years ago. How old are you, 17? Well, lad, you weren't even born when I was over there. And since then there's been another generation in World

War II, and now we have you and hundreds of thousands of others just like you and you're here for your country and the last boy I saw just as bright faced as he could be and he looked so young, so fresh, and his girl friend was with him, he was a paratrooper and she said you know my boy friend likes poetry, and he has a poem here. I said, could I see it? He said, I wish you'd read it out loud. So I read it aloud to nurses, to doctors, to the commanders, to the captains and to those who were around me. It was a beautiful piece of work, had real talent, but I think the thing that struck me most about it was the fact that the last line dealt with freedom's frontier.

You see, even at his young age he had an understanding of it. So you see, in their introspective moments they get a feel of what this thing is all about. About the weapons and the heat and the disease. Incidentally if the figure is correct, and I haven't checked it, but they say 60 per cent of our casualties are the result of tropical diseases over there, malaria particularly. Well that I can understand.

So you see, there is a logistic circle, starts maybe out of a classroom and through the training out to Vietnam, wounded, come back, maybe sent back out there, or finish their education. What an astounding thing and the circle was complete.

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