LINCOLN MEMORIAL  

A cat may look at a king.

A citizen may stand with Abraham Lincoln. He need not climb a pedestal to do so. It can be done anytime. It costs so little in time and effort. It requires no money.

There is a jet flight, suited to our age which is within the reach of all. It is the Transport of Fancy. It might be called the Imagination Jet. It needs no travel card, no airline ticket. Walk up the ramp and come abroad.

Note the stewardess. She is wraithlike and composed. Her name is History. A lovely name.

Ladies and gentlemen she begins in an eerie soft voice.

Our first stop is New Salem. This is 1832. There is a young man. Let's stand with the others and listen. Why, they're talking about election returns. That's Abraham Lincoln. He looks young. Well, he's 23. He should look glum. He was defeated. Somehow he is not. Can you hear his comment. He said, "The only time I have been beaten by the people." How undismayed he was?

Our next stop is Vandalia. Yes, there's the State Capitol. There's a crowd. It's noisy and tense. Must be something exciting. There is Abraham Lincoln again. They're counting votes. He was a candidate for Speaker of the Assembly. He's been defeated. This is the second time he was defeated for the Speakership. He should look sad. Somehow he does not seem to be.

Let's return to Springfield. This is 1846. Perhaps we better go to the law office of Lincoln & Herndon. Not much of an office did you say. Perhaps not. But it's very severity helps one think. They're talking of votes again. Why Lincoln is smiling. He's the winner for Congress. He's 37.

Come aboard that we might go to Bloomington. Look. This happens to be May 29 1856. There is Abraham Lincoln again. He's 47. Note how intense he is. Look at the people. It's a Republican
Convention. He's about to make a speech. Let's get up on the stage to be near him. There's a tremor in his voice. How fervent he is. He is make slavery a moral issue. It's the first time he put it on that ground. He says it's a conflict between right and wrong. He's seems so different from before. It seems as if a new glow is in his face and new fire in his spirit.

Let us return to Springfield. You must remember. They moved the Capital from Vandalia to Springfield. What commotion. Hear those people on the lawn shouting. Lincoln for Senator. Lincoln for Senator. There he is. We're just in time. What day is this. It's June 16, 1858. The lines in Mr. Lincoln's face are firmer. He seems to determined. That was a ringing statement. "A House divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave half free."

Let us go to Ottawa. There is the Illinois River. How placid it seems. But look at the dust and the crowd right in the middle of town. There must be some excitement. It's warm. It happens to be August 21st 1858. There is Lincoln again. And that short stout man. That's Stephen A. Douglas. Why it's a debate. He's pursuing that moral theme. Slavery is wrong, it's wrong, it's wrong.

Now for a longer journey. Relax for a bit. We're off to New York City. This happens to be February 27, 1860. Yes, this is a massive old building. Really one of the sights of New York. Peter Cooper the inventor built it. The place is full of people. There must be 1500. How could they ever get herein such a snow storm and traffic snarl. Everybody is in their finery.

You can relax for a bit. Our next stop is Chicago. What's there? The Republican National Convention. This is May 18, 1860. Such tumult. Look at the signs. "The Rail Splitter for President." They must be balloting. They're shooting a cannon. It's the third ballot. Lincoln has been nominated. Where is he? They say he's in Springfield.
You'll find his house on Jackson street said the hostess of History speaking. He remodeled it. They say the job cost over $1300. That's a might of money and so we returned to Springfield. Yes, there was the house. And there was Abraham Lincoln. The returns were coming in. He sat in that old rocker, his favorite chair with his long legs out before him. He stood at long last and mused a few moments. And then he said "Mary we've been elected."

And so to Washington. How gray and dreary it seems it looks stormy. But there is some blue in the Heavens. There seems to be so many soldiers and cavalry. How odd the Capitol looks. The dome hasn't been finished. Who is that man taking the oath. That's Hannibal Hamlin the Congressman from Maine. He's taking the oath as Vice President. And that trembling man in the robe who is administering the oath to Lincoln? That's Chief Justice Taney of the Supreme Court. (Address before oath.) Lincoln speaks so clearly, so firmly. "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?"

"In your hands, my dissatisfied countrymen fellow countrymen, and not in mine is the momentous issue of civil war." "Though passion may have strained it must not break the bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battlefield and every patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched as surely they will be by the better angels of our nature." And so he became President, this exalted rail splitter from Illinois.

It's August 22, 1862. "Let's take a carriage to the White House. People seem so uneasy. There are so many looking at a newspaper. Let's stop and get one. Wait a minute. This is an old paper. It's dated August 19. That's three days ago. But look, I see now. It's an article by Horace Greeley published of the New York Tribune. Notice the title "The Prayer of Twenty Millions. How truculent this seems and what cautricious things Mr. Greeley writes of the President. But let's be on to the White House. There he is. He's writing a letter in long hand to Mr. Greeley. "I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the near the Union will be 'The Union as it was.' ""
Things are stirring at the White House. This is Sept. 22, 1862. There is the entire Cabinet. Mr. Lincoln is reading. His voice is so solemn "That on the 1st day of January in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty Three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then thenceforward and forever free;" It seems unbelievable. All these people — they are to be forever free. By one Proclamation, the shackles fall forever.

It's a lovely day. We can set down right on the rolling battlefield. We must hurry. We're in time. Not a very large crowd to hear the President. And to think of the carnage, the graves. It's chilly but then it's nov. 19th 1863. The orator is talking a long time. They're ready now for Mr. Lincoln. "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.... that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth." How short. He could'n't have spoken more than two and one half minutes.

Here we are back at the nation's Capitol again. It's March 4 1865. It's so cold and drizzly. And what mud. But look at that multitude. Who would believe it. What an ovation. Who would believe the war was on? Who would believe the unkind and vindictive things said about him. Certainly not the people. Listen "The Almighty has his own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offenses... With malice toward none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in." There is a God. There is a Conscience; there is an inexorable justice. And now the oath. That's chief Justice Salmon P. Chase. Look, Lincoln stoops to kiss the 5th Chapter of Isaiah.

We're back in Springfield again. What day is this. It's may 4 1865. This is Oak Ridge cemetery. There's the tomb. The vast crowd. He's home. The rail splitter the Salem Postmaster, the Country lawyer, the 16th President is home.