LINCOLN

Birth anniversaries are markers along the journey through the motionless medium of time. They are like pinnacles which we can look back on for inspiration, look about to appraise the current scene and look ahead with hope.

Anniversaries of great public servants afford an opportunity to stand on the pinnacle and examine our own tradition.

What is tradition? The word itself is so threadbare and overused and yet it has a very precise meaning. It includes all the elements, personalities, the events, the great glories, the aspirations and the hopes that have been woven into the lovely and beautiful fabric of a free America. Small wonder that the Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, "Hold fast to the traditions ye have been taught."

As one thinks of events in the American tradition, he thinks of the Pilgrims, Valley Forge, the Louisiana Purchase, Monroe Doctrine, Gettysburg, the Emancipation Proclamation.

As he thinks of the glorious things in our tradition, there comes to mind the tears of fathers and mothers who have watched their sons march away and the precious young lives laid on the altar of this Republic.

As he thinks of people in our tradition there comes to mind Washington and Paine, Decatur and Zenger, Marshall and Webster, Lovejoy and Garrison, Boone and Wayne.

And above all, there comes into his mind the name of Abraham Lincoln, whose anniversary we observe.

Few people will remember when he died. Men, women and children remember when he was born, because that was the beginning of a personality that stamped itself on the affairs of the world.

Common Man

In observing his anniversary, we pay tribute to an exalted common man. We think of his candor and integrity, his modesty and compassion, his courage and patience, his simplicity and his consuming faith.
He was the kind of man who before the Battle of Gettysburg could get on his knees and say so humbly to the Lord that if the Lord would be with his troops, he would be with the Lord.

And when we think of him as a Republican, we think of his political courage because he could say as he once said, "the probability of defeat should not deter us from supporting a cause which is just." How refreshing that was in those years when victories sometimes had more appeal than the durable welfare of the nation.

The Golden Thread

What is it that runs through his life like a golden thread?

It is his devotion to freedom. As a young man he took a vow to crush the tyranny of human thralldom. As a candidate for the Senate he asserted over and over again the doctrine of free men. At Gettysburg he asked a deathless question, for there he said "whether a nation conceived in liberty can long endure." In his messages to Congress and in his Inaugural addresses, freedom and the dignity of man was the dominant theme.

Nowhere was it so well exemplified as on that day when en-route to the Nation's Capital to take the oath as Chief Magistrate he stood in Independence Square before a vast concourse of people. It was at a time when volcanic forces were gathering and passions were being kindled. There as he watched the flag, he said to his fellow countrymen, "If this nation cannot be saved without giving up the principle of the Declaration of Independence, I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it."

Design for Today

Freedom is still the design in this modern, feverish, bleeding world. It has been so in every generation since liberty was wrested from King George III in 1776. It is the essence of our hopes. It is the one lasting basis for the spiritual fulfillment of man's destiny and for durable peace.
Menace of Our Time

How strange that in this enlightened age liberty is still the consuming issue.

This is so because the Marxian concept still marches abroad to liquidate human liberty and dignity and seeks to crush the spiritual inside and the progressive hopes of mankind.

It is so because we saw the hideous mask of socialism raised within our own country.

It is so because bankruptcy could so weaken the domestic front as to invite the progressive liquidation of the liberty of our people.

It is so because a spurious and counterfeit liberalism began to confuse our people as to the true nature of freedom.

It is so because a kind of political apathy was seizing upon millions of our people and they were ready to confess that we have reached the end of the road and that the essence of a free America was done.

What Course in The Days Ahead

What course do we pursue in the days ahead? America as the beachhead of freedom must be preserved in a hostile world for otherwise through pain and bloodshed, through annexation and sorrow, these lost steps of freedom will have to be retrieved.

Freedom has a price and we must be willing to pay it.

That price consists of knowing the slow stain that menaces freedom on the home front so that we can the more intelligently cope with it.

Part of the price is to know what freedom really is and to fight for it.

Part of the price lies in the zeal with which we are willing to rededicate and reconsecrate ourselves to freedom's cause.

Part of the price lies in vigorous and unselfish action on the part of the citizenry.

And part of the price lies in work.
These are the attributes of a common man named Lincoln, and how well in this day and age we can take them to heart as we measure our own individual and group responsibilities to the American cause. When we have requited our faith, even as he did, we can then sing, with all the reverence that the heart can hope "that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom."