A VISIT TO THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

Ladies and gentlemen this is the Lincoln season. On February 12 we mark the 157th anniversary of his birth. In other years it's been rather customary to visit with him, and I mean literally to visit with him. I've had that pleasure in many places before, but this week I found occasion to visit with him at the Lincoln Memorial here in the Nation's Capital, and so I have him here although he's standing, but in the Memorial he is sitting in a huge chair. So, Mr. Lincoln, it was my pleasure to visit with you this morning in that very impressive Memorial that your fellow countrymen through the authorization of Congress built to you.

It did seem a little strange to me that it took 57 years after you left here in the flesh before that Memorial was completed and dedicated, but in that time there has been opportunity to evaluate what you've done for your country and what you've done for all of mankind.

First, it's such an impressive Memorial. I've said on other occasions, when Mrs. Dirksen and I drove by there on evenings, there was the glow of soft light on your figure and on this particular occasion we had our daughter with us. She was just a child then, but when we stopped to look, in a very hush tone she said, daddy there is Mr. Lincoln. I said that's right, he's gone in the flesh, but he's always here, and you are always here.

I believe on other occasions I've mentioned also that line in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Hebrews, there he was speaking about the sacrifice made by Abel to gain righteousness, and he uses these words, he says, being dead, yet speaketh. So in
the flesh you're gone. The immortal temple has been dissolved. But you speak as if you've always spoken and you have spoken in every generation to the American people. This year will be no exception. All over the country there will be men on rostrums to deliver their apostrophes to you and define their text in the wisdom that you have left on the printed pages for all to see in the pulpits of our blessed land. Your name will be used and it will be extolled, and they will find text that is suitable to the occasion. We come back always for your wisdom because you are a wise man.

I sometimes think, Mr. Lincoln, of my own difficulties. Every day my desk is piled high with literature, with articles, covering every subject under the sun to assure the problems of our country are complex, and they ramify into all the corners of the earth. But you didn't have all this literature, all these papers, somehow you had an instinct for reducing it to the plainest terms and then finding the very simplest answers. It's a little strange that always and always we seem to look for the complicated answers for the ills and the problems of mankind. If we could only go back in heart and mind and soul, perhaps we would be benefited by the way you consulted heart and mind without the benefit of articles, books, and expositions and essays showing all manner of attitude on the problems of today.

I'm glad that's a classical Memorial that your country built for you. It's not unlike the Parthenon of ancient Greece. I stood on that hill and saw the Parthenon too, with its columns, and the architect and the designer followed out that classical design that was worthy of you. Thirty-six columns for 36 states because there were 36 when that evil assassins bullet took your life. But on top they have engraved the names of 48 states of the Union when it was completed, and somehow we must add the other two states too, Hawaii and Alaska, so that the whole sisterhood is properly rounded out.
But I thought it was a magnificent thing that they should engrave, line by line, first the Gettysburg Address on the South wall and then your very sublime Second Inaugural on the North wall. I've read your Address at Gettysburg that you delivered long ago. You said, fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men, all men, are created equal. Now we're engaged in a great civil war testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.

Rather interesting thing. You see, that question, that challenge, has come ringing down the corridor of the years and it's here with us even as it was with you holding the Union together and making this concept of government work.

Doubtless from where you look, you can see youngsters in Vietnam today. They're twelve thousand miles from home. There may be as many as 200,000 and why are they there? We gave our word. We made a pledge. We said we would safeguard the independence and the liberty of that little country with less than fifteen million people and so, there it is again, whether a nation conceived in liberty can endure and here, even as when you were here, we have taken up the torch of that challenge to test it out all over again and this will not be the last. It will probably go on decade after decade. But always and always men who treasure freedom and who have a fervent regard for liberty will stand up to the challenge and will meet it for we know as you know and as you do that man was meant to be free.

Then of course those last words, that government of the people and for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth. That's a challenge also. You see the invasion of the rights of people from time to time as much as to say, well it's really not government of the people at all, it's by the elected representatives and sometimes they get careless with their responsibility. So that challenge is with us.
But I looked at the other wall and there I saw your Second Inaugural. What a magnificent thing it was. You didn't talk very long, it wasn't necessary. You were deep in the war, as you recall, and you tried to pour heat and oil on the troubled waters of the day and troubles there were in every corner of the country -- insofar as it existed at that time. You knew there was to come a day when that war had to end and then the question was how shall all these human passions be dissipated, how shall North and South be brought together again, is there a balming period, is there any healing balm that can bring that about? And then you uttered that phrase very magnificently, with malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in. That was a beautiful expression, but what I liked about it was when you said to all the people, even though they were still divided at the time, with malice toward none, and with charity for all. How easy it was for people then to entertain malice. They saw this so many places. Those who wanted to punish the South and punish them terribly. They had no compassion whatsoever. And you said with charity for all and then with firmness in the right. If ever we needed a virtuous thing, it's that. First to be sure we're right, and then to be firm in the right and not retreat, not relent, not surrender, that is in the good tradition of our country.

How much we owe you for the words you have left for us and what a magnificent testimony it is to you, sir. You who lived in my home state, where you practiced law, you even practiced law in my home town, my home town of Pekin. I'm sure you haven't forgotten it cause we haven't forgotten it. Your name is engraved in stone there on one of the steps on the old courthouse.

So we remember you and when we speak of our state as the Land of Lincoln, we speak with affection, for we are the Land of Lincoln, we are your Land, except all of the land is your land and for that matter all of the world was your world because
I've seen your words engraved in stone in India, in Uruguay, and in so many countries over the world. That's the esteem that comes to you, sir, for your magnificent leadership, your sublime character, and the deep impress that you made upon your people.

May we never cease worshiping at your feet and continuing to enshrine you in the hearts of every American, young and old.

I'll see you again, sir, next year.