WEDNESDAY WRAP-UP

Of the Geneva, New York Rotary Club

www.GenevaRotaryClub.org

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Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021

Next Week:

We began the Zoom meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance (using a visual of the American flag).

Guests: Susan Schermerhorn, guest of Paul Kirsch and Clifton Springs Rotarian

Announcements:

- President Dave Cook welcomed Brien Ashdown to his first official meeting.
- Dave also hoped that we will be back meeting in person by this summer.
- The Friday "Happy Hour" was successful, thanks to Mary Lawthers organizing it.

Happy Dollars:

- Bruce Tuxill and his wife, Keren, got their COVID vaccines yesterday.
- Dave Cook was happy he didn't get caught speeding down East Lake Rd.
- Ruth Leo fined herself for missing Monday's Board meeting.
- Shad Cook is happy that his daughter and her friend are OK after a car accident. They are both fine and recovering from the ordeal. *(Glad to hear it, Shad!)*
- Chris FitzGerald was happy to be back, and looks forward to seeing us more.
- Dave Cook quipped that Brien Ashdown stood on his front porch after his induction, and not one Rotarian went by to wave and welcome him to the club! Fines will be imposed!
- Jerry Forcier is working on a system to electronically pay fines and happy dollars. In the meantime, fines and Happy Dollars can be sent to P.O. Box 1144, Geneva, NY 14456

Today's Program

As has been the tradition for the last twenty years, in honor of President Lincoln's birthday, **Paul Kirsch** made the following remarks regarding the Gettysburg Address,

started years ago by the late Fred Toole. The Club thanked Paul for carrying on this tradition and for his years of service.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS
GRC MEETING FEB. 10, 2021 PREPARED BY PAUL KIRSCH

Good afternoon, fellow Rotarians. Years ago, Rotarian Fred Toole, a Geneva attorney, played the piano as we began our weekly meetings by singing, "America." (You know it. It's the one that goes "My country tis of thee…") It was Fred who later on recommended that we honor America each year with programs on our Revolution and Civil War. He chose the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address as symbols of our heritage. Reading them each year at a meeting became a club tradition.

When Fred died, about 20 years ago, I volunteered to continue the tradition, and I decided to do more than just read the documents. So, where Fred would read the Gettysburg Address at a February meeting, I added historical perspective, examining and reporting on topics relating to the Battle of Gettysburg.

Today's is my last presentation on the Gettysburg Address, and in July will be my last presentation on the Declaration of Independence. Our board will then decide how the tradition will be carried forward.

Today's program includes information about the Battle of Gettysburg and the Union cemetery built there; explains how a little-known Illinois lawyer was elected president in 1860; describes the initial public reaction to Lincoln's memorable speech; and presents five of Lincoln's visions of the future, a future he would not live to see.

I'm especially pleased that Mike Rusinko and Dick Austin are again with us for this presentation. I wish we were in-person, but zooming is what we have at this time.

Following Paul's remarks, Mike and Dick gave a background of the events leading up to the Gettysburg Address:

There was grim glory at Gettysburg on the sweltering days of July first, second, and third of 1863. The Army of Northern Virginia, under the command of Gen. Robert E. Lee, invaded Pennsylvania on a sweep toward Washington. At the small town of Gettysburg, Lee's troops encountered the Army of the Potomac, under the command of Maj. Gen. George G. Meade. Three days of ferocious battle ensued. When Lee's force retreated on July 4, some 51,000 men and boys, clad in blue wool or tan cotton, were dead or dying, wounded or missing.

After the battle, Pennsylvania's Governor Andrew Curtin asked local lawyer David Wills to establish a cemetery in Gettysburg to honor the 3,000 Union dead to be buried there. Wills supervised development of the site, set a date for the dedication, invited guests, and organized an agenda for the day's events. Perhaps only as an afterthought, he asked President Lincoln to say a few words at the dedication of the cemetery. The president would not be the main speaker. That honor went to the noted orator Edward Everett, former governor of Massachusetts, U.S. Senator, and Secretary of State.

Abraham Lincoln, Kentucky-born and now an Illinois lawyer, was little known before he was elected president. The 1860 election he won had been a four-way contest decided after 10 Southern states had lost their votes in the Electoral College by seceding from the Union.

In time, Lincoln proved himself to be more than a log-cabin born, firelight educated, frontier rail-splitter and country lawyer; as more than father of the Republican Party; as more than Civil War president and Commander-in-Chief; as more than emancipator of slaves, wordsmith, and martyr.

As person, politician, and president, Lincoln was both in the moment and of the future. He tended to the immediate needs of a nation at war while not forgetting that the still-young 87-year-old nation had a future.

Lincoln was an active Commander-in-Chief in a war which if lost, would have two independent nations on the same continent. He spent hours in the telegraph office following the movement of his troops in the field and took an interest in the development of new weapons. For example, Lincoln personally tested and approved Christopher Spencer's seven-shot repeating rifle whose carbine model was extensively used with great success by the Union cavalry.

Lincoln was a very good politician, knowing **how** to negotiate to maximize success and **when** to compromise to minimize loss. He obtained congressional support for the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery by skillfully wielding his political capital.

Lincoln's focus was on the nation's future as well as its present. And if there had not been a Civil War, we would still honor him for five initiatives visionary then and significant to American society ever since.

The first initiative was the expansion of higher education. The 1862 Morrill Act established land-grant colleges in the fields of agriculture and the mechanical arts, setting aside over 17 million acres of federal land for that purpose. New York's land grant college, Cornell, was founded in 1865, admitting students two years later.

The second initiative was the settlement of the vast West, which had been inviting development ever since Jefferson's 1803 Louisiana Purchase. The 1862 Homestead Act made millions of acres of Western land available for settlement. After paying $18 to register a claim, settlers had to work the land for at least five years and then would be granted 160 acres or more of the federal land free and clear.

The third initiative, which had been debated since 1790, was the creation of a stable economy and banking system. Both were necessary to assure future economic development and essential to finance the war. Federally insured paper money, called "greenbacks," were first issued in 1861, and the National Banking Acts of 1863 and 1864 created a network of national banks.

The fourth initiative was the development of a direct overland connection and a communication link between our Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The Pacific Railroad Acts of 1862 and 1864 led to the trans-continental railroad and the westward extension of Samuel Morse's telegraph, itself of tactical significance to the Union during the war.

The fifth initiative would lead to a subtle but significant change in our popular culture. It was public acceptance of Lincoln's grand vision to preserve the national government and, at the same time, provide the nation with a new birth of freedom, both of which he mentioned in his Gettysburg Address. It was a real "e pluribus unum" moment in American history. Out of many states, one nation.

Before Lincoln, when referring to the nation as a whole, folks would tend to say, "the United States **are,**" the plural referring to the existence of many states. After Lincoln, folks said, "the United States **is**," the singular referring to the one national government. We were no longer a collection of independent states that had been colonies of Great Britain only 87 years before.

Until 1863 the war was not going well. Confederate generals were licking Union generals. But the outlook changed in two days, July 3 and 4 of 1863. Meade defeated Lee at Gettysburg, saving Washington, and Grant, the leader Lincoln had been searching for, took Vicksburg, opening the Mississippi River for the Union. Lincoln now was free to honor the fallen Union troops at Gettysburg and also to visualize the future he was planning for the nation, a future he would not live to see.

Now, let's turn to November 19, 1863. Some 15,000 visitors gathered on this damp and muddy day for the dedication of the new Soldiers' National Cemetery. Many were there to hear the famous orator, Edward Everett, whose two-hour address did not disappoint them. He gave them what they had come to hear. When it was his time to speak, Lincoln delivered his masterpiece, his transcendent 272-word Gettysburg Address.

From most reports at the time, Lincoln's talk was a failure. Never mind that the president was not a polished orator, like Everett. Why, some opined, 272 words was not long enough to be called a speech, never mind be an address. Yet, it was Everett, the renowned orator who that day recognized greatness

when others did not. In a letter to the president, Everett wrote, "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

Now, the Gettysburg Address:

"*Four score 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 are created equal.*

"*Now we are engaged in a great civil war testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

"*But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—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.*"

Four way test:

"Of the things we think, say or do:"

1. Is it The Truth?
2. Is it Fair to All Concerned?
3. Will it Build Goodwill and Better Friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial for All Concerned?

Dave Cook	**Stephanie Hesler**	**Jerry Forcier**	**Ford Weiskittel**	**Bob McFadden**	**Mike Rusinko**
President	President-Elect	Vice President	Secretary	Club Treasurer	Foundation Treasurer

Submitted by Ruth Leo