

It was on the 16th of June, a month before the slaughter at Bad Axe, that the battalion to which Lincoln belonged was mustered out, at Whitewater, Wisconsin. His release from his second service was signed by a young lieutenant of artillery, Robert Anderson who, 29 years later, as Major Anderson, was in command of Fort Sumter to hear the opening guns of the civil war.

When his 20 days were up under Captain Iles, the same day Lincoln enlisted for a third time for 30 days more--in the company of Captain Jacob Early. Although he again saw no actual fighting, he witnessed the savage results of the skirmish at Kellogg's Grove on June 25, and helped bury five men whom the Indians scalped. On July 16, 1832, Lincoln was mustered out for the third and last time at Black River.

The men started home the next day. Lincoln and his mess-mate George Harrison had their horses stolen, so walked and rode by turns with others mustered out. Lincoln and Harrison bought a canoe at Peoria and paddled down to Pekin, then to Havana. There they sold their boat and again set out the old way, over the sand-ridges, for Petersburg. The discharged volunteer arrived in New Salem only 10 days before the August election. Lincoln picked up the race for the legislature, but to no avail. It was not only his first attempt at public office, but it was also to be his first defeat.

However, former Captain Lincoln never took his campaigning seriously. The politician's habit of glorifying the petty incidents of a candidate's life always seemed absurd to him, and in a speech--made in 1848, ridiculing the effort on the part of General Cass' friends to draw some political advantage from that gentleman's respectable but obscure services on the frontier in the war with Great Britain--he stymied any future writer from painting his own military achievements in too lively colors. He said:

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, I am a military hero? In the days of the Black Hawk war I fought, bled, and came away. I was not at Stillman's defeat, but I was about as near it as General Cass was to Hull's surrender; and, like him, I saw the place very soon afterwards. It is quite certain I did not break my sword, for I had none to break, but I bent my musket pretty badly on one occasion. If General Cass went in advance of me picking whortleberries, I guess I surpassed him in charges on the wild onions. If he saw any live fighting Indians, it was more than I did, but I had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitoes; and although I never fainted from loss of blood, I can truly say I was often very hungry. If ever I should conclude to doff whatever our Democratic friends may suppose there is of black-cockade Federalism about me, and thereupon they shall take me up as their candidate for the Presidency, I protest that they shall not make fun of me, as they have of General Cass, by attempting to write me into a military hero.

Captain Lincoln's short--but revealing--military experience in that rough-hewn, frontier, untrained, volunteer-fought Black Hawk War was to be the preview of those great qualities he was to portray nearly 30 years later. In 1850, the author Herman Melville clearly had Lincoln's calibre in mind when he wrote:

In time of peril, like the needle to the lodestone, obedience, irrespective of rank, generally flies to him who is best fitted to command.

LINCOLN ESSAY COMPETITION

The fifth place winner in the Annual Lincoln Essay Contest, sponsored by the Lincoln National Historic Site, is Kristin Haslow, an eighth grade student at Casey Junior High School in Mt. Vernon, IL. We are printing the five winners - the first four appeared in Feb., Mar., Apr., and May.

LINCOLN'S LEGACY

by
Kristin Haslow

A major idea that Abraham Lincoln left with us was that all men were created equal. He believed that no man should rule another's life. To enslave others was wrong and Lincoln proved it. In a letter written to Joshua Speed on August 24, 1855, Abraham Lincoln wrote: "As a nation we began by declaring that 'all men were created equal'. We are now practically reading it 'all men are created equal, except Negroes'. When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read 'all men are created equal, except Negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics'. When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some other country where they make no pretense of loving liberty."

When Lincoln was in his twenties and he traveled down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. On his way he learned the true meaning of slavery. He saw black men and women being forced to work and live in poor conditions. He decided that he would try to make a difference in the black man's life.

When Lincoln became President of the United States, he decided to do something about slavery. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, trying to make a difference. Although no slaves were actually freed, the idea stuck and finally the Thirteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution.

If Lincoln wouldn't have pressed the issue of all men being equal, we might still have inequality today. Only white men would really know what it means to be free. Martin Luther King, Jr., could have never helped black people to become free if he was a slave himself. Black singers and musicians would never have published records or become famous if they had been denied the opportunity.

Abraham Lincoln knew that if this country was to survive, everyone had to work together. Black people and white people could not fight against each other. He wanted all people side by side to work together to make this country strong.

If Abraham Lincoln were alive today, I wonder what he would think about women. The statement that "all men were created equal" also applies to women. A lot of people still believe that men are better than women. Women are finally proving that they are equal. The head of the government in the Phillipines is a woman. Margaret Thatcher is the Prime Minister of England. Both of these women are doing a very good job. Women are also proving their equality in the work force. Women can now hold office jobs higher than men. I believe that someday a woman will become President of the United States.

Abraham Lincoln's idea that all men were created equal is a true statement that has broadened to include women. His idea of equality for all is something that will in time include everyone. .