

## ECHOES

### Topic: A Civil War Prison

Wayne Bowen, Ph.D., the new treasurer of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table, will be the speaker at the Friday, Feb. 24 luncheon meeting in the Downtown Club, 2120 Kern Street, Fresno. His topic is "Camp Chase, Civil War Prison."

Bowen has a lifelong knowledge of Camp Chase, which was at Columbus, Ohio. He was raised in a home that actually stood on part of the grounds of the old prison camp. His father was a Virginian, a descendant

of Confederates, so Bowen early on developed an interest in the Confederate cemetery that was also a part of the prison camp.

He spent more than three years in the Navy during World War II, attending Newberry College and the University of South Carolina in an officer's training program and then serving on destroyer escorts in the Atlantic.

When he left the service he returned to college at

Ohio State University, where he received a BA in 1948. He had studied Spanish in high school and college, so in 1948, he and an older brother took advantage of a special bus fare and traveled to Mexico City.

He and his brother enrolled in what then was Mexico City College studying Spanish and Latin American literature. After a year he returned to Columbus and worked as a flight attendant for Eastern Airlines for awhile, then returned to Mexico City for another year.

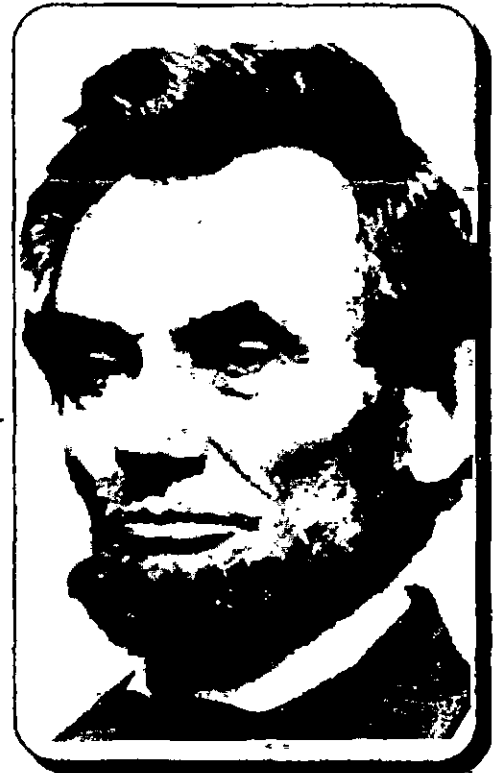
He received a MA degree from Emory University in 1953, and then a Ph.D. at Ohio State in 1958. He began teaching Spanish at UC Davis in 1958, and in 1964 transferred to California State University, Fresno. He is now retired.

### Lincoln: War President

By Verne Cole

This is the month in which the nation celebrates the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln, who as elementary school children are taught, "saved the nation and freed the slaves." Therefore it seems fitting that we give some thought to Lincoln.

Each year for the anniversary of Lincoln's most famous speech, Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania invites a prominent historian to lecture on a Civil War topic. And since this is at Gettysburg, it is understandable that a number of the annual talks have focused on Lincoln.



That last paragraph is rewritten from the acknowledgments in Gabor S. Boritt's collection of some of the  
Continued on next page

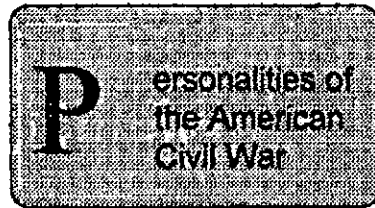
# Lincoln: War President

Gettysburg lectures, a book entitled "*Lincoln the War President*," published in 1992 by Oxford University Press.

The lectures, or essays, were contributed over a period of several years by Pulitzer Prize-winning historians Robert V. Bruce, James M. McPherson, David Brion Davis, Carl N. Degler, and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., plus eminent historians Kenneth M. Stampp and Boritt, who edited the book.

Each of the essays makes excellent reading. Each is a view of Lincoln and his actions during the war that reshaped the nation and pointed it toward the future we now enjoy. None of these historians can be criticized for not knowing their subject.

However, two of the essays stand out in my mind. Bruce's is entitled, "*The Shadow of a Coming War*." He writes that disunion or secession had been threatened and warned against almost from the day the Constitu-



tion was adopted, and that during the four score years since that event several revolts had been suppressed (i.e., Whiskey Rebellion; Shays Rebellion).

Despite this, he writes, until Fort Sumter fell, Lincoln seemed always in a state of denial that there was that possibility. Confederate President Jefferson Davis, on the other hand, knew about war. He had served in the Mexican War with distinction and had been Secretary of War for the Union. As early as 1849 he said publicly, if "all other things fail there is left the stern appeal -- to arms."

Through the 50s, Davis often expressed the view that if the federal government were to attempt to put down secession in a Southern state, most likely South Carolina, "that act of usurpation, folly and wickedness would enlist every true Southern man for her defense."

Lincoln, as early as 1838, in a speech devoted to violent internal upheaval, made no mention of a possible war between the North and the South. His theme was "savage mobs" and "disregard for law," and he stressed that they pervaded both sections. This was at a time that Clay and Webster and others were thundering about a possible war between the states.

Lincoln obviously didn't want to think about such a possibility, just as those of us who lived through 40 years of potential nuclear war refused to speculate about it. Yet once in the 1856 campaign he was goaded by Democrats who charged that a Republican victory would lead to secession, he responded:

"The Union . . . won't be dissolved. We don't want to dissolve it, and if you attempt it, *we won't let you*. With the purse and the sword, the army and the navy and treasury in our hands and at our command, you *couldn't do it*." He caught himself immediately and continued, "All this talk about disunion is humbug, nothing but folly."

In the 1860 presidential campaign he said nothing publicly on the subject of war. Even after South Carolina seceded, he hoped it would come back. After the Confederacy was formed, he believed that Southern Unionists would prevail and that Americans would re-

Continued on next page

## The San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table Officers for 1994 are:

**John Taylor, President**  
**Bill Head, Vice President**  
**Barbara Moats, Secretary**  
**Wayne Bowen, Treasurer**

**Other board members are Linda Clague, Tim Johnson, Verne Cole, newsletter editor; Rick Kubiak, historian; and the immediate past president Charles Jorgensen.**



**Change of Address? Call Verne Cole, 435-8410 or Wayne Bowen, 291-4885.**

# Lincoln: War President

unite. Speaking at several places en route to his inauguration, he said "there will be no blood shed unless it is forced upon the Government."

When Fort Sumter fell, Lincoln felt compelled to respond. He had always known that disunion was intolerable. Now the Government's hand was forced.

Gabor S. Boritt's essay, "*War Opponent and War President*," pictures Lincoln, the descendant of Quakers, as a liberal, "not a pacifist, but . . . a pacific man. Gabor says he abhorred violence and prized the "Reign of Reason," the "mind, all conquering mind."

Lincoln, who had served a few weeks as a volunteer during the Blackhawk War, had seen no combat, but had seen five dead soldiers, all of whom had been scalped. He remembered those bodies with horror all his life. It was a paradox of the liberal faith that the lover of peace had to be ready to fight wars to defend the survival of that faith.

Yet when the war began, Lincoln still did not anticipate the fury, the duration, or the consequences. To him, it was a rebellion. The South still was part of the nation. It was never a war between slave states and the Northern free states. So he issued his first call for 75,000 volunteers to serve three months.

However, Lincoln grew into a great war leader. Boritt quotes T. Harry Williams as saying Lincoln "acted as commander in chief and frequently as general in chief." He changed his opinions and eventually demanded the overthrow of the social and political system of the South. He adopted what James McPherson (another of the essayists) has called "a national strategy of unconditional surrender."

The ending of slavery, Lincoln declared, would end the only thing that could have caused the war among Americans. From the beginning he argued that a great lesson of peace should be "reaching all, the folly of being beginners of a war."

So who was Lincoln? He was as divided as the nation. This pacific man read volumes on war tactics; he studied warfare through the ages; he became the

## Join the Civil War Round Table

The San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table was founded in January 1991. Its mission is to study all aspects of the American Civil War, including the Antebellum years, the conflict itself, and the period of reconstruction immediately following the war. There are Round Tables all across the nation, including several in California.

This Round Table (as do most of the others) has accepted the responsibility to assist in the preservation of our National battlefield sites. Therefore \$5 of every dues payment goes to national advocates of such preservation.

The organization usually meets either on the last Thursday of the month for dinner at the Remington restaurant in Southeast Fresno, or on the last Friday of the month for luncheon in the Downtown Club. Notices are included in the newsletter. If you think you would like to join the C.W.R.T. please attend one of our meetings.

recruiting leader of the Union; he fired commanding generals who did not carry out the war as he thought they should have.

Here, an incident excerpted from the book, "*Lincoln, an Illustrated History*," by Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter Kunhardt, printed by Knopf, 1992:

It was now the third month of the war. "For more than a month, Lincoln had been galled at the sight of a huge Confederate flag flying over neighboring Alexandria within range of his spyglass. . . To secure the Pottomac, the President called for the immediate occupation of Virginia and gave the job of taking Alexandria to his friend Elmer Ellsworth, commander of the famous New York Zouaves, whom Lincoln had once called 'the greatest little man I ever met.'

"Following a moonlight raid, and while under march to dismantle the city telegraph lines, Ellsworth caught sight of the giant flag that he knew the President hated.

Continued next page

# Lincoln: War President

... Ellsworth climbed to the roof (of the Marshall Hotel) cut down the flag and began to carry it down as a trophy of war.

"New York Tribune reporter Edward House witnessed what followed. 'While on the second floor, a secessionist came out of a door with a cocked double barrelled shot gun . . . took aim at Ellsworth and discharged, lodging a whole load of buckshot in Ellsworth's body, killing him instantly.'

"News of the incident spread across the river like lightning, reaching Lincoln just moments before he was interrupted by two visitors. 'As we entered the library we [saw] . . . the President standing before a window, looking out across the Potomac . . . He did not move until we approached very closely, when he turned around abruptly, and advanced toward us, extending his hand. 'Excuse me,' he said, 'but I cannot talk.' . . . [Then] the President burst into tears, and concealed his face in his handkerchief.'"

This is the tender-hearted man who became a conscious advocate of total war. He ordered Sherman's

**Dues reminder**

Annual dues, which include the newsletter, are \$25 of which \$5 goes to battlefield preservation. Beginning this year all annual dues become payable in January. Those who have paid at other times of the year in the past will have their dues prorated this year if they so desire. Checks should be made out to C.W.R.T. and mailed to Wayne Bowen, 4885 N. Backer #120, Fresno, CA. 93726.

march through Georgia. He ordered unconditional surrender. He wanted, above all, for the nation to be reunited no matter the costs.

Immediately after the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse upon hearing his wife use the word "enemy," Lincoln retorted : "Enemies, never again must we repeat that word."

The war was over. The nation was reunited. As Boritt asks. "Can this nation, or any nation, hope for a better, more decent leader?"

San Joaquin Valley  
Civil War Round Table  
4885 N. Backer #120  
Fresno, CA 93726

