



I just returned from a lovely weekend at Gettysburg, including a guided bike tour of the battlefield, a somber stroll through the National Cemetery, and encounters with charming re-enactors. If you have never been or not been in a while, a visit is highly recommended. The relatively new (2008) Visitor’s Center and exhibits, including the refurbished Cyclorama, are astounding. While the tours and exhibits tend to eschew the political and focus more on the minutiae of the fascinating and, then unprecedented, July 1863 internecine military conflagration, one cannot help but take away the timely lesson that our freedom is not free and that sometimes our worst enemies are our fellow citizens and even our leaders. As Ben Franklin warned in 1787, the Founding Fathers created “a Republic, if you can keep it.”



45

By M. Kelly Tillery

Standing near the spot where Abraham Lincoln delivered his “few appropriate remarks” at the dedication of that cemetery on November 19, 1863, listening in my head to his high-pitched voice recite those eloquent 272 words, I was struck by the obvious and stark contrast between our 16th and 45th presidents. It is altogether fitting and proper that we conduct such an analysis at this time. Both Republican presidents bested Democrat opponents, both with a minority of the popular vote, and both gave speeches about the significance of American sacrifices in war and about the greatest battle of their times to save representative democracy at about 2 ½ years into their first terms.

While our 45th’s recent D-Day commemoration speech was surprisingly good, it was no Gettysburg Address. Unlike the latter classic, it was 10 times as long and only read, not also authored by, its deliverer.

45 has frequently attempted to use the legacy and imagery of 16 to not-so-subtly imply, however implausibly, that

there are some similarities between his universally-revered predecessor and himself. Lest you think our Narcissist-in-Chief is the sole source of this bizarre analogy, know that an odd and undistinguished group concurs: convicted felon (pardoned, not coincidentally, by 45) and conservative commentator, Dinesh D’Souza; serial adulterer (45 is, too) and ethically-challenged former House Speaker Newt Gingrich; and acting legend and political wing nut, Jon Voight. 45 often uses an iconic painting of 16 as a backdrop for his staged events and took that audacity to a new level when he attempted to turn the nation’s birthday into his own at the Lincoln Memorial on July 4.

If you are a faithful reader of the magazine, I refer you to “Abraham Lincoln - Character of a Man” (The Philadelphia Lawyer, Vol. 79, No. 3, Fall 2016) and suggest that you conduct your own comparison of the character traits of 16 to those of 45. However, to assist, I will present just a few highlights, a Top 20 (10 are just not sufficient), for your consideration.

First, 16 served honorably, however briefly, as a volunteer

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(captain and private) in the Black Hawk War (1832), and for four years and 45 days, as commander-in-chief of the world's then largest military, during the greatest and most destructive war ever, yet 45 avoided military service, not once, but five times, including by a spurious (pun intended) claim of medical disability, during war time.

Second, while 45 filed for bankruptcy six times and is notorious for not paying his bills, 16 was scrupulous in paying his, even, for example, when it meant shouldering the burden for a wayward business partner and taking years to retire the debt.

Third, while 45 is an infamous and pathological liar (15,413+ in 1,055 days so far, just as president), 16 was known from youth, for good reason, as "Honest Abe."

Fourth, while 16 said that he did not understand women, he was a faithful husband to one for 23 years and was always polite and respectful to women; 45, not so much.

Fifth, 16 had respect for and an insatiable curiosity about science and how it could help make a better world for mankind, while 45 denies, conceals, and obfuscates science and even prohibits some scientific study.

Sixth, 16 was a voracious reader, absorbing, learning and becoming a better man at every step, while 45 reads little, if at all, and it shows.

Seventh, 16 supported internal improvements (infrastructure) from his first campaign to his last breath, while 45 has done nothing in this regard.

Eighth, 16 said that education was "the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in," while 45 ran a fraudulent "university" and now proposes, for the third year, over \$7 billion in cuts to education funding.

Ninth, 16 revered the law, urging that the rule of law become our political religion, while 45 ignores, breaks, and dismisses it, along with some of the very institutions and public servants who make, enforce, and uphold it.

Tenth, while early in his political career 16 used ridicule and sarcasm to eviscerate his opponents, by age 33, he had matured and no longer did so, unlike 45, now a septuagenarian, who still constantly uses personal insults and vulgar language like a schoolyard bully to denigrate anyone who disagrees with him.

Eleventh, 16 knew well that immigrants created, built, enriched and saved this nation, facts of which 45, a latter-day Know Nothing, seems oblivious.

Twelfth, 16 had little interest in amassing personal wealth, much less in using his political power to enrich himself or his family, quite unlike 45.

Thirteenth, 16 believed in and practiced transparency in government, while 45 seems to believe in only himself and conceals, deceives, obstructs, and distracts at every

opportunity.

Fourteenth, 16, with congressional support, used tariffs surgically, as an economic tool to protect necessary, fledgling industries in a then still-developing nation, not, as does 45, unilaterally, as a blunt economic weapon to punish and manipulate other nations for his own partisan political purposes.

Fifteenth, 16 had issues with the press in time of civil war, when all press was admittedly partisan, but he still believed a free press was crucial to a thriving democracy, unlike 45, who calls the press "the enemy of the people" and uses his power to try to intimidate and silence it.

Sixteenth, 16 persuaded with unimpassioned reason and facts, unlike 45, who uses name-calling, fear, lies, and personal attacks, often without any reason or facts.

Seventeenth, 16 was a kind, decent, gentle, respectful man, adjectives seldom, if ever, truthfully applied to 45.

Eighteenth, 16 never boasted and never hesitated to acknowledge his errors, while 45 constantly praises himself and claims that he is never wrong.

Nineteenth, 16 had a scholarly, almost religious reverence for the Constitution, while 45 appears never to have read it, much less respect it. ("Once A Week," *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, Vol. 80, No. 2, Summer 2017).

Twentieth, 16 appointed jurists deeply versed in the law, not ideologues, believing "the function of the courts is to decide cases—not principles," while 45 appoints only partisan ideologues, often despite their lack of experience and expertise. As 45 would say, in his inimitable, blunt way, "Big difference."

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Before I left Gettysburg, my fiancée and I attended a service at the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church and sat in a pew just in front of the "Lincoln Pew," where 16 sat with 69-year-old Gettysburg resident and oldest battle veteran, John Burns, at a political meeting on the evening of November 19, 1863, after delivering his address at the new cemetery. Perhaps, not coincidentally, the pastor's sermon was on the virtues of kindness. ■

M. Kelly Tillery (tilleryk@pepperlaw.com) is a partner in the Intellectual Property Department at Pepper Hamilton LLP and a member of the Editorial Board of The Philadelphia Lawyer.