

Swartz' Gettysburg Address
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Most people don't know that Abe Lincoln had a speechwriter. And almost nobody knows the name of Abe's speechwriter. So, let me educate you. Manny Swartz, my great great great grandfather, who emigrated from the old country in 1830, was that man. Farmer, Rabbi, cookbook author, and talented rail splitter, who, after traveling around the country for decade, ended up living in Illinois with his wife, the former Mildred Rosenbaum. Together Manny and Mildred had 11 children...some made them proud, and well, then there are the others...but that's another story.

Mr. Lincoln was a neighbor of Manny's, and recognizing Manny's eloquent way with words, in addition to bonding over his talent splitting rails, beseeched Manny to come to Washington when he was elected President in 1860 and to work as his speech writer and part time rail splitter. I happen to be the family member who is in possession of some of Manny's notes, and therefore, can document some of the conversations he had with Mr. Lincoln. Here's an example.

1863. The Union army had just won the battle of Gettysburg. Manny and the President are sitting down for their traditional Sunday brunch of lox and bagels, usually served with a sliced onion and a shmear of cream cheese, and Abe looks at Manny and says "Manny, I need an inspirational speech for Gettysburg. Not a run of the mill campaign speech, but one that will knock the socks off the crowd...a real winner."

To which Manny replies, "Ok, once I finish my bagel, and have another cup of coffee...have you tried the garlic bagel, Mr. President?....we will get to work".

They finish the brunch, clear the lox and bagels, set aside the Sunday NY Times, which was also an undisclosed Lincoln tradition, and move over to the oval office.

Abe puts quiver to paper...."87 years ago our fathers brought forth a new nation..."

Manny quickly interrupts..."we need eloquence, Mr. President. 87 years....that sounds like the beginning of my bar mitzvah speech...let's jazz it up.... not use 87 years, but instead say something like, "five score minus 13 years ago".

To which Abe responds, Manny, Manny Manny..."first of all, the word, 'score'....most people don't know what that means...is it a baseball score, or are we settling a score, or is it the results of my 5th grade English exam?... and people don't want to know how I did in English class....Mrs. Calhoon was my teacher, and she was a real hard ass...and..."

Manny again interrupts... "look, its ok to show the people you're smart...people want a smart President". Maybe in the future they won't, but for now, they want smart....let's consider holding up signs, a cue card that says, 20 years = one score. Abe ponders for a minute..."ok, but what about the math part?. If we use the score thing then people have to subtract. Five score minus 13...lets see, if I use all my fingers and toes, I still can't get to 87."

Manny sits back in his chair and ponders. "well, most people can add better than they can subtract...how about we take an addition approach?" Abe sits up in his chair, and exclaims "I need

a danish". He asks the white house cook to bring him a cherry danish. Most people don't know he had a thing for cherry danishes since he was teenager, but I digress... Haltingly, he agrees "I like it, especially with the cue cards...so how about we start with 4 score and seven years ago"

Manny contently smiles. He knows he's got a winner.