Second draft - 7-14 out for final draft same story (Pg. 7-13 missing)

In Lincoln's Chair.

"Yes Sir; he was what I call a godly man . Fact is, I never knew anybody I felt so sure would walk straight into Heaven, everybody welcomin' him, nobody fussin' or fumin' about his bein' let in as Abraham Lincoln."

"Think he believed in God?" Abraham Lincoln believe in God! Not a doubt of it, had Him nearer right than anybody I ever knew."

It was Billy Broyn talking. We were seated by his stove in his drug store on the public square of Springville, Illinois, he tilted back in a worn high-back Windsor , I seated properly in his famous "Lincoln's chair," a seat too revered for anybody to stand on two legs. It was a snowy blustery day and the talk had run on uninterruptedly from the weather to the iniquities of the Republican mayor. (Billy was a Democrat, so of course the mayor was iniquitous), and had presently arrived , as it always did, when we met to "when Mr. Lincoln was alive." Billy had been dwelling lovingly on his great friend's gentleness, goodness, honesty, when absent-mindedly I asked the question which launched him on a new tack.

"You know I never knew anybody who seemed to me more interested in God, more curious about Him, more anxious to find out what his purpose was in the world than Mr. Lincoln. I reckon he was allus that way, so when he was a little shaver and he never changed. Of course I didn't know him when he was a boy. First time I met him was back in '37, when he moved up from New Salem. Major Stuart had took him in as a partner. This was the only drug store in town in them days. I was learnin' to be a clerk -- didn't think then I'd ever own the place from the ground up -- not much.

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"I must say he wasn't a very likely lookin' lawyer then, if you didn't go further than his clothes, but it didn't take this town long to see he was a man. Yes,Sir, from the start we knew a full-sized man had come to Springfield.

" But even if I dddn't know him before than, I knew his kind of life well enough. I was born like him, poor as Job, no schoolin' to speak of, but that didn't prevent my learnin' early a lot about religiun. I take it my mother was same kind of woman as his, tryin' to make a good boy out me like Lincoln's mother did out of him. I remember hearin' him tell once how his mother used to tell him Bible stories nights and Sundays; about the only kind she knew I expect; teach him verses -- always quotin' em. I can see him now sprawlin' on the floor in front of the fire listenin' to Nancy Hanks readin' about Moses and Jacob and Noah and all those old fellows, tellin' him about Jesus and his dyin' on the cross. I tell you that took hold of us little shavers, livin' as we did remote like and not havin' many books or places to go. Filled you chuck full of wonder and mystery, made you lie awake nights, and sometimes swelled you all up, wantin' to be good.

"There aint any doubt though that what he learned then took deeper hold on him than me. I didn't roll it over much, just took it for granted, but Mr. Lincoln wasn't that way. Everything he heard from the start he just grabbed on to, and wouldn't let loose until he understood it. I remember his bein' in here one day after he'd been East to make his speech in Cooper Union, and some body had a newspaper from New York, and in it a man told him he'd been so surprised to hear how clear Mr. Lincoln argued, and how good his language was that he'd gone to him and asked him where he'd been

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educated, and then the man told him what Mr. Lincoln said . We shewed it to him and he read it over, and I remember his saying, "Well that's about the size of it, boys, just as I told this man what little education I've got came from hangin' on to whatever came my way until I understood it. I remember when I was a little codjer, how I couldn't let a thing alone until I bounded it North and bounded it South and bounded it East and bounded it West, and then I had to tell it to the other young ones so they would understand. I remember when I first learned about the movement of the sun and moon and planets and the way the earth rolls on its axis, why I stayed awake nights thinkin' that out. I used to get the children together and just hammer it into them, makin' it clear to them seemed to help me. I did that about everything, politics, history, George Washington , and religion. I got to be quite a preacher in those days. You know how those old fellows felt they hadn't done their duty if they didn't get everybody in church weepin' for their sins. We never set much store by a preacher than didn't draw tears and groans. Pretty strong doctrine mostly hell-fire. There was a time when I preached myself to the children egery week we didn't have a minister. I didn't think much of my sermon if I didn't make 'em cry. I reckon there was more oratory than religion in what I had to say."

"I reckon he was right about that, allus tryin' to see if he could do what other folks did, sort of measurin' himself. However there was more to his religion them days than his preachin.' You take a boy like Lincoln, just naturally observin and meditatin', and there's a lot goes on inside his head that he don't get credit for. A boy can't be brought up in a backwoods settlement like Gentryville,

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Indiana without seein' a lot that's puzzlin', sort of scares you and makes you miserable. Things was harsh and things was skimpy. There wasn't so much to eat. Sometimes there was fever and ague and rheumatiz and milk sick. Women died from too much work. No medicine -- no care, like Mr. Lincoln's mother did. I expect he must have taken it pretty hard to see his mother lyin' dead in that shack of theirs, see Tom Lincoln holdin' his head and wonderin' what he'd do now. Poor little Tad! He must have crept up and looked at her, and gone out and throwed himself on the ground and cried himself out. Hard thing for a boy of 7 to lose his mother, specially in such a place as they lived in.

"I don't see how he could get much comfort out of what they taught about her dyin', sayin' it was God's will and hintin' that if you'd been what you ought to be it wouldn't have happened, never told a man that if he let a woman work herself to death it was his doins she died -- not God's will at all. God's will she should life and be happy and make him happy. A God of wrath that was what Abraham Lincoln was brought up in, and there aint any denyin' that he had to go through a lot that carried out that idea.

"Still things have to be worse than they generally are anywhere to keep a boy down-hearted all the time -- specially a boy like Mr. Lincoln, with an investigatin' turn of mind like his, so many new things comin' along to surprise you. Why it was almost like bein' Robinson Crusoe out there them days -- wild land havin' to make everything for yourself -- hunt your meat and grow your cotton, mighty excitin' life for a boy -- lots to do -- lots of fun too winter and summer Somehow when you grow up in the

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country, you can't make out that God aint kind, if he is severe. I reckon that was the way Mr. Lincoln sized it up early, world might be a vale of tears, like they taught, but he saw it was mighty interestin' too and a good deal of fun to be got along with the tears.

Trouble was later to keep things balanced, as he went along. Discoverin' life was mighty risky business out there in those days, bad anytime, anywhere, but Lord it was ornery out here -- whisky -- fightin' -- loafin' -- bad for boys. Lincoln had to see all that, still it never took hold of him. Twant he want full of life -- he was -- big, strong chap -- but difference was his mind was workin' on life and they want -- only their bodies. Older he grew, more he read and more he rolled things over, and he begun to run up against a kind of thinkin' along about the time he was twenty-one or twenty-two that was a good deal different from that he'd been used to, books that made out the Bible want so, that even said there wasn't any God. We all took a turn at readin' Tom Paine and Voltaire out here, and there was another book -- somebody's "Ruins" -- I forget the name.

"Volney?"

"Yes, that's it. Volney's Ruins."

"Do you know I think that book took an awful grip on Mr. Lincoln. I reckon it was the first time he ever realized how long the world's been runnin; how many lots of men have lived and settled countries and built cities and how time and time again they've all been wiped out. Mr. Lincoln couldn't get over that. I've heard him talk about how old the world was time and time again, how nothing lasted - men - cities - nations. One set on top of

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another - men comin' along just as interested and busy as we are in doin' things and then little by little all they done passin' away.

He was always speculatin' about that kind of thing. I remember in '49 when he came back from Congress he stopped to see Niagara Falls. Well Sir when he got home he couldn't talk about anything else for days, seemed to knock politics clean out of his mind. He'd sit there in that chair you're in that winter and talk and talk about it. Talk just like it's printed in those books little Johnnie Nicoley and his side partner got up. I never cared myself for all those articles they wrote. Wrong? am I? Valuable? Of course, but wasn't enough of Mr. Lincoln in ' em to suit me. I wanted to know what he said about everything in his own words. But I tell you when I saw the books with the things he had said and wrote all brought together nice and neat and one after another I just took to that. I've got 'em here in my desk, often read 'em and lots of it sounds just as natural, almost hear him sayin' it, just as if he was settin' here by the stove.

"Now what he tells about Niagara in the book is like that - just as if he was here. I can hear him sayin' 'Why Billy, when Columbus first landed here, when Christ suffered on the Cross, when Moses crossed dry-shod through the Red Sea, even when Adam was first made, Niagara was roarin' away.' He'd talk in here just as it is printed there; how the big beasts whose bones they've found in mounds must have seen the falls, how it's older than them and older than the first race of men. They're all dead and gone, not even bones of many of 'em left, and yet there's Niagara boomin' away fresh as ever.

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Mr. Lincoln
Lincoln

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as not getup and go out. It was so all along the time he was practicin out here. I reckon he got pretty tired tryin' to do the right thing, nothing seemed to count to suit him. And it kept him miserable, I reckon, to see so much meanness around . I never knew a man who liked people betterin' Mr. Lincoln did - seemed as if he felt the world ought to be happy, and that it could be if people would only do the right thing. But Lord a mighty, you take a town like this was along in the 40's when Mr. Lincoln was practicin' here, and get right down to what was really happenin' , and it was enuff to make a broodin' man like him sick, and want to quit. He had to handle it all, a lawyer does, men fightin' over a dollar, gettin' rich on cheatin', stingy with their wives, breakin' up families quarrelin' over wills, neglectin the old folks and yet standin' high in the church, regular at prayer meetin', teachin' in Sunday School. There was a lot of steady meanness like that all around, and it made him feel bad .

And then there was dreadful things happened every now and then, men takin' up with girls when they had good wives of their own. There 's more than one poor child lyin' over there in the grave yard because some onerery old scoundrel got the better of her, and there'smore than one good man been put to shame in this town because some woman who was no better than she ought to be run him down. Lord it makes you sick and then every now and then right out o a clear sky there'd be somewhere in the country a murder. Nobody would talk of anything else for days. People who hardly ever opened their mouths would find their tongues and tell the durnedest things. Lifeout here certainly want calculated to always a man naturally gloomy.

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"I don't mean to say he want around carryin' a long face and dwellin' on the woes of this vale of tears. Of course that want so, as I've told you no end of times, he was the best company that ever was - the fullest of stories and jokes, and nobpdycould talk serious like him. You could listen forever when he'd get to arguin' but spite of all that you knew some how he was a lonely man who had to fight hard to keep up his feelin' that life was worth goin' on with. Gave you queer feelin' about him- you knew he was xkdd different from the others, and it kept you from bein' over-familiar There was a man in here the other day I hadn't seen for years- used to be a conductor between here and Chicago - knew him well. It tickled him to death to have me set him in that chair you're in - looked it all over, said it seemed as if he could just see Mr. Lincoln settin' there. Well he got to talkin' about all the big bugs of this town that used to travel with him. Little Doug. Judge Dawis and he said something about Mr. Lincoln that xkaxkdshowed how he struck ordinary people like him and me:

"Lincoln was the most folksy of any of them. He didn't put on airs. But there was something about him which we couldn't explain that made us stand a little in awe of him. I now know what it was, but didn't then. It was because he was a greater man than any other one we had ever seen. You could get near him in a sort of neighborly way, as though you had always known him, but there was something tremendous between you and him all the time. I have eaten with him many times at the railroad eating houses, and you get very neighborly if you eat together in a railroad restaurant, at least we did in those days. Everybody tried to get near Lincoln when he was eating, because he was such good company, but we always looked at him with a kind of wonder. We couldn't exactly make him out. Sometimes I would see what looked like dreadful oneliness in his look, and I used to wonder what he was thinking about. Whatever it was, he was thinking all alone. It wasn't a solemn look, like Stephen A. Douglas sometimed had. Douglas sometimes made me think of an owl. He used to stare at you with his great dark eyes in a way that almost frightened you. Lincoln never frightened anybody. No one was afraid of him, but there was something about him that made plain folks feel toward him a good deal as a child feels toward h is father, because you know every child looks upon his wonderful father as a wonderful man.'

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"I've always figured it out that Mr. Lincoln was a sight more contented after he got his grip on the slavery question. You know how he felt about slavery, thought it was wrong and when he began to see there was a chance to fight it in a way that would count, he felt different towards his life, saw it did mean something, was some use. I reckon he began to believe God had a place for him - that he wasput into the world for a good and sufficient reason. Now as I see Mr. Lincoln that was all he ever needed to reconcile him to things. As he began to see more and more that he had his argument sound, and that it wastakin' hold in the country, that men was listenin' to him and sayin' he had it right, why more and more he was something like happy. He made up his mind that the time had come when God meant to say to slavery, 'Thu far and no farther,' and he was teady to put in his best licks to help Him.

"What hurt him most, took the joy almost out of him so as he said it seemed as if he never would be glad again was havin' to go to war to back up his reasoning. As he saw that comin' on and don't make any mistake, he did see it, was likely to happen long before he went to Washingto, he went through some pretty dark times, wonderin' if after all he'd been proceedin' along the lines the Almighty meant for him, and he never got over that struggle long as he was President, always askin' himself whether he was on God's side. Puzzled him bad that both sides thought God was with 'em. He Pointed out more than once how the rebel soldiers was prayin' for victory just as earnest as ours - how the rebel people got the same kind of help out of prayer that the Union people did. And both couldn't be right.

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"There isn't any doubt he often tested out whether God agreed with his argument or not, by the way things swung. It was that way about the Emancipation Proclamation. You know how he thought about that for months, and for the most part kept it to himself. He didn't want to do it that way, was dead set on the North buying the slaves instead of takin' em. But he had the Emancipation Proclamation ready, and he'd told God he'd let it loose if He'd give us a victory. Sounds queer, mebbe, but that's what he did. He told the Cabinet so, and they've told about it. A little mite superstitious, some would say. But. Mr. Lincoln was a little superstitious. Interested in things like signs and dreams - specially dreams - seemed to feel they might be tryin' to give him a hint.

He's told me many a time about dreams he'd had, used to have same dream over and over, he never got tired studyin' what it meant. You remember that happened in the war. He'd used to dream he saw a curious lookin' boat runnin' full speed toward a shore he could't make out clear, had that dream before nearly all the big battles - had it the night before they killed him, and told the Cabinet about it- thought it meant there'd be good news from Sherman.

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They say after his boy Willie dead down in Washington he got interested in spiritualism. I shouldn't be surprised. He allus tested out everything new that come along. Don't worry me if he did hold seances. You can be pretty sure they didn't fool him any, and if he found something that way rest of us don't see, I reckon he had a right to. He tried out new kinds of powder, new rifles. Why shouldn't he interest himself in spiritualism if 'twas new to him.

"As I was sayin' there's no doubt but he kept figurin' on what God was tryin' to do by the way things went. You remember how I told you once of havin' a long talk with him at night that time I went down to Washington to see him. He was powerful discouraged just then for him. Things was bad, awful bad. Country just plum worn out with war, comes a time in war, ~~comes pretty after to come~~ when people ~~they~~ just turn against it. Can't stand the blood-lettin', the sufferin', and the awful wickedness of it. There was a lot of that feelin' in '64. People willin' to give up anything - let the South go - let her keep her slaves - do anything to put an end to the killin'. I tell you a man has to keep his eyes ahead in war- keep telling himself over and over what's it all about. Mr. Lincoln had to They were talkin' peace to him, riotin' about the drafts, stirrin' up more kinds of truble for him that he ever knew there was, I reckon. And he felt it - felt it bad, and that night it seemed to do him good to talk it out. You see I come from home, and I didn't have no connection with things down there, and 'twas natural he'd open up to me as he couldn't to them on the ground; and he did.

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"I've studied a lot, Billy," he said, 'whether this is God's side of this war. I've tried my best to figure it out straight and I can't see anything but that He must be for us. But look how things is goin'. I can't believe God approves of slavery. I know my God don't - can't. The whole Bible teaches liberty - if it teaches anything I've always believed God was workin' through this government to give men more chance than they ever had before. I never could make slavery square up with a free country. It never should have been allowed to get hold here I never could understand how men saw it any other way. But good men- good, serious men who pray and who, so far as I can judge, try as hard as I do to see what's the right thing, believe I'm wrong - that God's on their side.

'One thing sure all I can do is to follow what I think's right. Whatever shall appear to be God's will, I'll do. There's quite a number of people who seem to think they know what God wants me to do. They come down every now and then and tell me so. I must say as I've told some of them that it's more'n likely if God is goin' to reveal His will on a point connected with mu duty he'd naturaly reveal it to me. They don't all lay it up against me when I talk this way. Take the Quakers, They're good people, and they've been in a bad fix for they don't believe in slavery and they don't believe in war, and yet it seems to have come to them, that out of this war started to save free government, we're going to get rid of slavery. But they can't accept that way. Still they dont lay it up against me that I do, and they pray regular for me

One thing I'me sure of that sorta pulls me along is that this war is logical enough. Seems to me to be accordin' to God's laws - has all along. We'vebeen wrong North andSouth about slavery. No use

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to blame it all on South. We've been in in too, from start. If both sides had been willin' to give in a little, we might a worked it out, that is if we'd all been willin' to admit the thing was wrong, and take our share of burden in puttin' an end to it. It's because we wouldn't or mebbe couldn't that war has come.

'It's for our sins, Billy, this war is. We've brought it on ourselves. And God ain't goin' to stop it because we ask Him to. We've got to fulfill the law. We broke the law, and God wouldn't be God as I see Him if He didn't stand by His own laws and make us take all that's comin' to us. I can't think we wont win the war. Seems to me that must be God's way, but if we don't and the Union is broken up and slavery goes on, well all it means accordin' to my way of seein' things is that the laws aint's satisfied yet, that we aint done our part. There'll be more trouble until the reason of trouble ends.

'But I don't lay that up against God, Billy. What it seems to me He's tryin' to do is to get men to see that there can't be any peace or happiness on this world so lnng as they aint fair to one another You can't have a happy world unless you've got a just world, and slavery aint just. It's got to go. I don't know when. It's always seemed to me a pretty durable struggle - did back in '58, but I didn't see anything so bad then as we've come to. Even if I'd known I couldn't have done different, Billy. Even if we don't win this war and the Confederates set up a county with slavery in it, that aint going to end it for me. I'll have to go on fightin slavery. I know God means I should.

'It takes God a long time to work out His will with men like us Billy, bad men, stupid men, selfish men. But even if we're beat,

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there's a gain. There are more men who see clear now how hard it is for people to rule themselves, more people determined government by the people shant perish from the earth, more people willin' to admit that you can't have peace when you've got a thing like slavery goin' on. That's something, that's goin' to help when the next struggle comes.

'You mustn't think I'm givin' in, Billy. I aint, but look how things are goin'. What if we lose the election, and you must admit it looks now as if we would, what if we lose and a Copperhead Govemment makes peace - gives the South her slaves- lets the erring sisters as Greely calls them, set up for themselves. I've got to think about that, Billy.

'Seems to me I can't bear the idea all this blood-lettin' should end that way, for I know lasting peace aint in that set of circumstances. That means trouble, more trouble, mebbe war again until we obey the law of God, andlet our brother man go free.'

Always seemed to me that a man who could talk that way had a pretty big idea of God,

and there aint any doubt he felt that way to the end. Ready to agree to what God allowed, ready to admit we couldn't understand God's purpose, and 'twar our businessto do best we could and wait/ He said about that in his last Inaugural. You remember. Allus seemed to me he got the whole Bible, both Testements, boiled down in that speech. 'The will of God prevails, both are and against the same thing at the same time. It is possible he has something in view different from what either the North or South had at the start. We didn't start out to fight slavery. We started out to save the Union and the South started out to destroy it. He could

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have saved or destroyed the Union without a war, so He lets the war come and go on. Looks as if His will was to punish us and to punish the great rang, and both North and South have got to pay for their share in it.

'The Almighty has His own purpose', " he went on, 'Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away, yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until very drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

'I like to say that just like he said it. Seems kinda like music. He was that way sometimes, swung into sort of talk and made your heart stop to listen; it was so sweet and solem-like.

"Now, as I see it, that's the Old Testament - whole thing biled down, and what he ended up with seems to me the New, just about as near what Christ taught as any man ever got.

'With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God given us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphans - to doo which may achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.'

"I can't help thinkin' that a man who saw that way wasabout as near right in his religion as any man ever gets. If that aint what Christ had in mind, then I don't read the Bible right. I know no God I ever heardpreached is as big in his ideas, so fair-minded and so lovin' as Abraham Lincoln's God."

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