

## TRINITY AND THE STORY OF TWO PRESIDENTS

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Students, parents, and visitors who enter the campus from the Downes clock tower will note the granite plaque with an inlaid inscription in Greek, the translation of which is "The Leader in War and Peace at This Place Was Present as a Mark of Friendship."<sup>1</sup> The initials on the side, A.C.J. and D.D.E., are those of Albert C. Jacobs and Dwight David Eisenhower. The date is October 20, 1954. Eisenhower was then the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and received an honorary doctorate of law degree. The fact that he was willing to make the trip to Trinity combined with a political trip for then Governor John Lodge who was seeking reelection suggests "A Mark of Friendship" was genuine. Trinity President Albert C. Jacobs had been Provost of Columbia University when President Eisenhower was President of Columbia University.

Further down the Long Walk in front of what is now the Fuller Arch is the large rectangular stone with the initials T.R. and F.S.L., marking the platform from which the 26<sup>th</sup> President, Theodore Roosevelt (then 9 years out of office) spoke on June 16, 1918. The Latin inscription translates as:

"One who puts on his armour should not boast like one who takes it off"<sup>2</sup> Known as the Roosevelt - Luther stone, it indirectly marks the friendship between the then President of Trinity, Rev. Dr. Flavel Sweeten Luther and Theodore Roosevelt. A popular mathematics professor before he was appointed as the 14<sup>th</sup> President of Trinity, Luther was also a two-term Senator in the Connecticut State Senate. Both he and Roosevelt

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Knapp, '65, Special Collections Librarian and Archivist, "From the Archives," Trinity Reporter, Fall 2004, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The author checked the translation with Latin scholars.

were part of what was then called the Progressive Wing of the Republican Party.<sup>3</sup> A tradition of Trinity is that students never walk on that stone before their Commencement day, fearing that to do so would in some way prevent them from graduating. Graduating seniors do make a point of ceremonially stepping on the stone as they process at commencement.<sup>4</sup> (The tradition probably sprung up not after the marker was laid in 1919 but when the commencement platform was moved from facing the Bishop Brownell statue to facing out from the statue with students processing down the Long Walk. The change took place sometime in the 1970's).

When President Eisenhower spoke at Trinity, he was enjoying enormous popularity. His administration had negotiated an armistice in Korea which took effect in July 1953. It essentially left the country divided as it was in 1950. An Asian style democracy eventually emerged in the south and a totalitarian state in the north.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, if anything, the end of the Korean conflict enhanced Eisenhower's popularity.

President Eisenhower was not only popular at home but also abroad, particularly in Europe. His pronouncements carried weight in the world. In the era of the Cold War the might of the United States, which he could deploy but which he also was loath to do unless all options failed, was also at his disposal.

In rereading his remarks, which the author heard as a sophomore the following were addressed to my generation:

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<sup>3</sup> Peter J. Knapp in Cooperation with Anne H. Knapp, Trinity College in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Hartford, Connecticut: Trinity College, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> See "Trinity Traditions" [www.trincoll.edu](http://www.trincoll.edu).

<sup>5</sup> It took six republics before the Republic of South Korea, as we know it, emerged in 1987. See Adrienne Buzo, The Making of Modern Korea, Oxford: Taylor and Francis 2007.

If we are to develop the kind of understanding that will avoid the great catastrophe of war, we must know about the cultures of ... countries, the history of them. And above all, why they react to certain actions, certain considerations and circumstances in this world in a different way than we do. (President Eisenhower's address at Trinity College, October 20, 1954)

The President looked in essence to educational institutions in general, and Trinity in particular, to provide the next generation with the sophisticated understanding necessary to forestall armed conflict.

The Trinity classes of 1955, 1956, 1957 and 1958 heard President Eisenhower's address. Those of us still living remember his visit as a memorable event in our Trinity experience. There are, of course, no living alumni who heard Theodore Roosevelt speak to the 5000 people who had assembled on Saturday, June 16, 1918 (Commencement was the next day).<sup>6</sup>

In my imagination at least I thought of this dynamic, but sometimes controversial President as a true "lion in winter." Theodore Roosevelt was less than seven months from his death, having lived two lifetimes in one. He carried in his chest cavity a bullet he received from a disgruntled saloon keeper in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, campaigning in 1912 as the presidential candidate for the Progressive or Bull Moose party. His candidacy at that time had split the Republican party resulting in the election of Woodrow Wilson as President. The bullet had penetrated his steel eyeglass case and the single-fold 50-page speech he was carrying. As an experienced hunter Roosevelt realized that by not coughing up blood, the bullet had not entered the pleura. Not wishing to miss a golden opportunity, the former president spoke for 90 minutes

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<sup>6</sup> From the Trinity archives courtesy of Peter Knapp, '65, a copy of the "92<sup>nd</sup> Annual Commencement Programme of Exercises," there were 36 seniors, 18 of whom graduated and 18 were in National Service.

beginning with an often quoted line which in part is “I have just been shot... but it takes more than that to kill a bull moose.”<sup>7</sup>

The 1913-14 expedition into the Brazilian jungle nearly ended his life. The bullet he was still carrying was considered too risky to remove under the surgical techniques of the day. However, an injury and infection could be aggravated by its presence. Roosevelt did incur a minor injury on the expedition and infection set in. He may have also contracted Malaria. There was, of course, a physician on the expedition with a supply of quinine. He also had with him his son, Kermit, who had gone on the expedition at his mother’s request. Refusing to leave his father in order to finish the trip including completing the exploration of the River of Doubt - now the Rio Roosevelt, the former President once more cheated death but was considerably weakened from the experience.<sup>8</sup>

Even in the winter of life lions can be formidable. Within that analogy Theodore Roosevelt’s speech was - on paper, and I imagine in his delivery, forceful, pointed, and even scornful of those who were not fully committed to winning the Great War. The former president was a strong advocate of the War and highly critical of President Wilson. In the King James version of the Bible, the Latin translation noted earlier, that is, “One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off” becomes from 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 20, verse 11 “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.” From the quotation which President Luther initially read the former President then launched into his speech (perhaps sermon is a better description).

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<sup>7</sup> “Medical History of American Presidents,” [www.Doctorzebra.com](http://www.Doctorzebra.com) . See also [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore Roosevelt](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Roosevelt), pp. 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt wrote a very popular book on the expedition entitled Through the Brazilian Wilderness. The expedition would later be recounted in Candice Millard, The River of Doubt (New York: Doubleday, 2005).

One of his themes was: The direct assault on those who have boasted about the numbers of troops and planes we would have on the front lines but which at the time of his speech were not there assisting those who were in the trenches. The sub-text was that the Americans, indirectly perhaps the Wilson Administration, were boasting about what they would do but on which the Germans were delivering. In part this was true. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been signed on March 3, 1918 allowing the Central Powers, particularly Germany to reinforce the Western Front, launching what was known as the Spring Offensive. For example, in the Third Battle of Aisne from May 27<sup>th</sup> to June 6<sup>th</sup> when they moved too far ahead of their supply lines, the German Imperial Army was within 30 miles of Paris.<sup>9</sup> There were American troops engaged in the Battle of Belleau Wood. It took until June 26<sup>th</sup> to clear the woods of the German fighting force.<sup>10</sup> Thus given the information available to him at the time the former President could easily have assumed without saying so that England, France, and Italy needed more reinforcements provided by the U.S. to counter the German Spring offensive.

Although he had every opportunity to do so, not once did Roosevelt acknowledge the fact that he had four sons on the front lines. When he alluded in his speech to the need to help those on the front lines, Roosevelt also implicitly included his own sons. The closing sentences were:

No man... or woman should feel contented unless he or she can feel that everything possible has been done to put our strength efficiently back of the men at the Front. Our business is to win this war and win it now.  
(Speech of Theodore Roosevelt, June 16, 1918).

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<sup>9</sup> [www.Google.com/Third Battle of Aisne](http://www.Google.com/Third%20Battle%20of%20Aisne).

<sup>10</sup> [www.Google.com/Battle of Belleau Wood](http://www.Google.com/Battle%20of%20Belleau%20Wood).

Nor would one expect him to mention them. Since their childhood Roosevelt had drilled into his four sons that as members of the privileged class they had a duty to do more for their country than the average citizen. In time of war they were expected to be leaders in battle and to face even death. Some of this attitude may have penetrated even the younger of the two daughters, Ethel, who was a nurse in Paris working with her husband, a surgeon at the American hospital. She later spent 60 years with the Red Cross. Thus not only were the sons in World War I with a sister nearby, they also purposely sought combat.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile when Roosevelt gave his speech at Trinity, Dwight D. Eisenhower was three years out of West Point. He was a temporary (Bvt.) Lieutenant Colonel stationed in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where he was training crews of a tank unit to which he was assigned. Although Eisenhower was recognized by his superiors for his organizational skills, the order to deploy the unit to Europe came just before the Armistice on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Thus the future Supreme Allied Commander in World War II missed his chance for combat in World War I.<sup>12</sup>

Four weeks after Roosevelt gave his speech, that is, on July 14, 1918, his youngest son Quentin who was in the New Air Wing was shot down and killed. Upon discovering who he was, the Germans buried Quentin with full military honors.<sup>13</sup> Two of the other three sons, Archibald and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. were seriously wounded

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<sup>11</sup> [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Kermit Roosevelt; [www.com](http://www.com) / Archibald Roosevelt, [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Quentin Roosevelt. [www.Goodle.com](http://www.Goodle.com) / Theodoro Roosevelt, Jr., [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Ethel Roosevelt, See also, Edward J. Renehan, The Lion's Pride: Theodore Roosevelt and his Family in Peace and War (Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> See Stephen Ambrose, Eisenhower's Solder, General of the Army, President Elect (1893-1952); (New York: Simon Schuster, 1983) pp. 62-68.

<sup>13</sup> [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Quentin Roosevelt.

during the war. Kermit escaped the action unscathed. All three served in World War II but only Archibald survived dying of natural causes at 85 in 1979.<sup>14</sup>

It is Roosevelt's namesake that is the connecting link between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> President and the two markers on Trinity's campus. The second child and first son of the President, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. was a very successful businessman amassing his own fortune at a relatively early age. Both wounded and gassed in World War I, he nevertheless maintained his army reserve status and was one of the founders of the American Legion. Only modestly successful in politics (He lost the 1924 election for Governor of New York to Alfred E. Smith) he did hold appointed offices including Governor of Puerto Rico and Governor General of the Philippines in the Hoover Administration.<sup>15</sup>

In 1940 with the Second World War underway in Europe, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. attended a military refresher course and as an advanced student was promoted to Colonel. He returned to Active Duty in April 1941 in command of the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division which was the unit in which he served in World War I. Late in 1941 he was promoted to brigadier general.<sup>16</sup>

When America entered the War, Roosevelt saw plenty of action. Eisenhower was the overall commander in Africa and initially in Italy. Roosevelt had combat experience not only with his troops but also with those of the free French. Eisenhower appointed him as his chief liaison officer of the free French troops that fought in Italy. When Roosevelt was commanding troops he spent as much time at the front as he did at

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<sup>14</sup> [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Archibald Roosevelt: [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) /Kermit Roosevelt; [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

<sup>15</sup> [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. See also H. Paul Jeffers, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., The Life of a War Hero, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2002), particularly pp. 57-208.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffers, op. cit., pp. 211-214.

headquarters. Transferred to England in February 1944 to help plan the invasion of Normandy, he repeatedly put in requests to be in the first wave of the invasion. His immediate superior, Major General Barton was reluctant to grant permission. Roosevelt who was then 56 with arthritis and a cane would appear to be too weak to survive. Yet a written request to the top based on what an experienced soldier could do to get inexperienced troops to their destination finally won the day. Permission was granted by Major General Barton. Eisenhower could have refused the request, but he did not.<sup>17</sup>

Thus in typical Roosevelt fashion - be where the action is - Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. landed on Utah Beach with the first wave, the only general to do so. His own son, Captain Quentin Roosevelt II was on the first wave at Omaha Beach. (In the 1962 film, The Longest Day, Henry Fonda portrayed Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. landing on Utah Beach using a cane and carrying only a pistol.) When asked what he thought was the most heroic action he had ever seen in his forty years of military service, General Omar Bradley, the operations commander at D-Day said "Ted Roosevelt (at) Utah Beach."<sup>18</sup> The citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor recommended by Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight David Eisenhower, reads in part:

He (Roosevelt) repeatedly led groups from the beach over the seawall and established them inland. His valor, courage, and presence in the very front of the attack and his complete unconcern for being under heavy fire inspired the troops to heights of enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. Although the enemy had the beach under constant direct fire, Brig. Gen. Roosevelt moved from one locality to another, rallying men around him, directed and personally led them against the enemy. Under his seasoned, precise,

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<sup>17</sup> ibid. See also H. Paul Jeffers, op. cit., (Novato, CA: Presidio Press Inc., 2002) pp. 211-262.

<sup>18</sup> M. Paul Jeffers, op. cit., p. 262.



calm and unfaltering leadership, assault troops reduced beach strong points and rapidly moved inland with minimum casualties. He thus contributed substantially to the successful establishment of the beachhead in France.<sup>19</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. died of a heart attack on July 12, 1944. The Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded posthumously. Not only did General Eisenhower make the recommendation, he had also selected him for promotion to Major General and orders had been cut placing him in command of the 90<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division<sup>20</sup>. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.'s remains lie in the American cemetery at Normandy. Alongside is the grave of the re-interred remains of his brother Quentin, the only World War I soldier to be buried at Normandy.<sup>21</sup>

As the cliché reads “what goes around comes around.” Whenever you enter under the Clock tower I ask that you pause and look at the Eisenhower/Jacobs Stone. Think of a president whose name marks his era, whose leadership skills helped to bring to a successful conclusion the greatest sea invasion in the history of warfare and ultimately the war in Europe. At the same time he never fired a shot at the enemy in either World War I or World War II.

Then proceed along the Long Walk stopping at the Roosevelt/Luther stone. Think about the contrasts in this man. He was a soldier/hero in the Spanish American War. However, he was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating the end of the

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<sup>19</sup> [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) / Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., p. 9. Nearly 57 years later, January 16, 2001, Theodore Roosevelt was belatedly awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously for his exploits on San Juan Heights in July 1898 during the Spanish American War. Arthur and Douglas MacArthur are the only other father and son to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. See H. Paul Jeffers, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

<sup>20</sup> H. Paul Jeffers, *op. cit.*, p. 261

<sup>21</sup> [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., p. 9

Russo-Japanese War - the first American to receive any Nobel Prize. Roosevelt was a prolific writer whose books were well received. Some of his writings reflected his love of the "great outdoors." This quality in turn translated into a forceful advocate of conservation, leading to 5 national parks during his presidency. Finally his sense of duty to country was transmitted to his male offspring who responded accordingly in two World Wars. One son so distinguished himself on D-Day that he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Meanwhile his son, Roosevelt's grandson, was in the thick of the fighting on Omaha Beach. Father/grandfather would have been proud of both.

As Lincoln pointed out within a different context in his message to Congress in January 1863 "We cannot escape history." Within the confines of this lovely campus of this historic institution, there are plaques marking the spot where spoke two of our presidents connected inter-generationally by war and who were instrumental in shaping our nation's history. That is worth one's reflective consideration.