

The Gettysburg Experience
A Tragic History in One Dismal Act
or, The Birth of Value-Added Speechwriting

By Garland West

Dramatis Personae:

Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States

Skylar Bush, White House Chief of Staff

Cletis James, White House Political Strategist

Rhett O'Hara, White House Press Secretary

Andy Rather, White House Media Advisor

J. Martin Spalding, President, Satton Triggs Daft

Brandon Marsteller, Director, Semantic Solutions, STD

Bailey Barnum, Director, Special Events Management, STD

Gerald Mathers, Project Manager, STD

Louise Parker, STD Intern and Personal Communication Coach

Scene: A small yet elegant meeting room in the White House. A single oval table sits in the middle of the room, with chairs evenly spread around it, a single slightly larger upholstered chair at the table end nearest the door, a common wool shawl draped over its back.

Curtain rises. Lights up from black. The players enter, one by one, making small talk and gently laughing in obvious bonhomie. When all enter, Spalding speaks.

Spalding: Does everybody know each other? Kyle, why don't you handle the introductions on your side and I'll handle my side.

Bush: Sure thing, Martin. But you go first. Everyone here already knows the President. If you don't you should leave the room right now.

(Chuckles all around.)

Spalding: Not to be too immodest, but I believe most of you know me already from the various fundraisers I've hosted around town. I am J. Martin Spalding, and I head the Satton Triggs Daft agency here in Washington. This is Brandon Marsteller, head of our semantic solutions practice.

Marsteller: Sir.

Lincoln: A pleasure, I'm sure.

Spalding: And this is Bailey Barnum, who runs our special event management service.

Barnum: Mr. President.

Lincoln: Sir.

Spalding: Gerald Mathers, one of our top project managers.

Mathers: A great pleasure, sir.

Lincoln: And mine, young man.

Spalding: ... and one of our top interns, Louise Parker, who works as a special assistant and presentation coach for us.

Parker: Just call me Jellybean. Everyone does.

Lincoln: *(Soft laugh.)* Whatever you like, my dear.

Bush: I believe you also know me, from the same fundraisers. I am Skylar Bush, the White House Chief of Staff. On our side of the table, let me introduce Cletis James, our chief political strategist...

James: Gentlemen.

Bush: ...Rhett O'Hara, our White House press secretary, and Andy Rather, our media advisor...

STD: (In unison) Hellll-o there.

(She merely nods and smiles.)

Spalding: Why don't we sit down and get started.

(The various people take seats at the table, with Martin and Cletis on each side of the president, who sits at the head of the polished table. Others sit in the same hierarchy as introduced.)

Can we get a few bottles of water in here, please? With lime, if you have it.

Kyle, shall I kick this off?

(Bush nods assent.)

Okay, let's get down to the basics. What's our concept? What's the headline we want to see in November, the morning after this ceremony?

Lincoln: Gentlemen, if you will allow me. I've already worked up a draft of what I'd like to say. If you could just listen to this address and give me your thoughts and reactions...

(STD team looks nervously at one another. After a slight pause, Spalding speaks.)

Spalding: Mr. President, with all due respect. Giving good speech is what this group is all about. Let us help you help yourself.

Lincoln: Mr. Spalding, I have made a few speeches in my career.

Spalding: Call me 'captain,' sir. Everyone does. And to be blunt, Mr. President, remember that the New York Times reported that – and I think I recall the exact language they used – that Stephen Douglas “kicked your rail-splitting ass” in some of the debates you had in the first election. I hate to repeat language such as this, but I my job is to be candid with you, not just tell you what you want to hear.

So let me make my point as strongly as I can. I say this with absolute sincerity, as a professional, an admirer and – I hope – a friend. Sir, this speech has to be something special. We can help. That is why we are here. To make it special. Something people will remember.

Lincoln: I am happy to learn from anyone.

Spalding: Look, you're not a bad speaker, and some of your stuff is reasonably well-written. But you have some really talented people around the table. You have to trust us. Seven brains and a century of experience have to be better than one brain and three years experience, even in the White House. No one is smarter than everyone. Let us help you help yourself. Remember, the future of the United States depends upon you – and so does the success of the Republican Party.

Lincoln: Very well then. If you think best.

Spalding: Let's set the stage, so to speak.

Scene – rural Pennsylvania. It's been a long, long day, maybe a fall chill, and a busy program. Lots of people standing in suits and long dresses. Probably two hours from Mr. Everett, plus whatever else the other speakers have to say. Hymns, prayers and all sorts of spiritual ritual to play to the rural conservatives. We're on as the last speaker, when they are going to be tired, restless, and way past ready for happy hour to get started. Most of them have trains to catch, too. Not to mention the smell. Our advance team says it smells like something died there.

Marsteller: Focus first on Everett. He's the keynoter, not us. He is a more experienced politician than you, to be blunt – governor, senator, VP candidate, and most important of all, president of Harvard, for god's sake. Plus, he drinks the reporters under the table at the Capital Tavern – and pays the bar tab. He's got them in his pocket.

O'Hara: That's for sure. He bought them lock, stock and notepad long, long ago.

Rather: Rhett is absolutely right. The media have no ethics. None.

Barnum: Our research department says he has prepared a stemwinder of speech – more than 13,000 words, which means he will be talking for two hours, at least.

Spalding: Let's be sure we know the standard we're up against. Whatever we do here will have to compete with what he says. If we don't, people will remember what he says, not what our president says.

Let's not kid ourselves. What those kids did at Gardensburg was great. I'm proud of every one of 'em. They deserve some recognition. But let's not lose our focus. What's at stake is something bigger than all those faceless people we put in the ground. This is about the preservation of this presidency, and the future of the Republican Party. The Union we fought for at Gardensburg was really a fight for the work this administration has just begun. We're not going to have a better platform to get to a big audience and get them on board with four more years.

Marsteller: Spot on, Captain. Those kids deserve nothing less. Otherwise, they shall have died for squat.

That's a great line. Let's not lose it.

Spalding: Now that we're all on the same page, why don't we go through the President's notes line by line and talk through

the concepts and core messages he's trying to capture, and maybe try to polish some of the language and phrasing.

Everyone all right with that?

Lincoln: Yes, let's do that. Quickly. I'll read you the address I've prepared. Ahem.

(Pause.)

Four score and seven years ago...

Marsteller: (Interrupts.)

Well, Mr. President, right off the bat we have a problem. Remember, these people will be tired and anxious to get on with things. And right away you're asking them to do math in their heads. Tell 'em how many years. Don't make them work for it.

James: Plus, Mr. President, we may want to recycle this later on, too, in other places. If you use a specific number of years, you're dating the material. We need a time frame that is flexible and can work for an entire administration.

Marsteller: What about something simple and easy. "Some time ago..."

Spalding: Perfect. Jerry, be sure to capture that.

Lincoln: ... our fathers brought forth on this continent...

Marsteller: Whoa. Do you mean our ancestors, or just the fathers?

James: Well said, Brandon. Mr. President, your words present a major problem for us: the women factor. They may not have the vote, but you can bet your stovepipe hat that they will have a say in what their husbands decide to do. No husband I know is willing to stand up to a spouse with a

strong opinion – and the will to make your life sheer hell if you don't listen to her and understand her feelings.

Spalding: Absolutely right, Clete. The whole sexism thing is a political hot potato that is getting hotter every day. Let's steer clear of it. We need a noun that is gender-neutral and inclusive – not something that smacks of sexism and a focus on the past. This speech is all about the future – the future that will be possible in a second Lincoln term, with his Republican congressional allies.

Lincoln: Sexism?

Marsteller: Why not something simple and easy? "Some people..."

O'Hara: We can do better. That's generically inclusive. Let's make it specifically inclusive.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. Make it generic, but specific.

Marsteller: Put some poetry into it, too. "Some patriotic self-empowered men and women..."

Spalding: Jerry, get that.

Lincoln: Self-empowered?

Marsteller: And while you do, lose the whole "this continent" thing. It's obvious we're talking about this country. Do you for one minute believe people think we mean Canada or the Holy Roman Empire? He's president of the United States, for god's sake.

Spalding: Right. It spoils the meter of the sentence, too. Jerry....

(points at Jerry)

Lincoln: ... a new nation, conceived in liberty...

James: Think bigger, Mr. President. It's not just a new nation. It's a whole new concept of government... an entirely new social contract between the government and the people. Let's make it clear it was BIG change... something new and entrepreneurial. We changed the world, after all. Those fancy-pants Europeans need to be reminded who showed them the way.

Marsteller: Great conceptual thinking. But let's find a way to say it that jumps out at you... really sticks.

How about "a new governmental paradigm." That nails it to me.

Spalding: Good. Jerry, get that.

Lincoln: Paradigm?

James: Maybe it's just me, but they "conceived" thing raises a flag. We need to be sure we don't say anything that gets the abortion issue on the table. Once we do that, we've lost our ability to spin this to the media. All they'll do is start the whole he-said/she-said thing about the difference of opinion. Our message will be lost in controversy - and remind people of the ways this country is still divided on things that lots of people are prepared to fight and kill for. It's not the message for this platform. Keep your eye on the ball: peace... stability... a bright, bright future... with Honest Abe.

Spalding: I can see now why you have the job you do. That is a great point. Great point.

Marsteller: That means we can't say 'born' either. Let's make it simple and easy. "Based upon..."

Spalding: Jerry. (Gestures again to Jerry.)

Marsteller: And while we're at it, let's make this sing. "Liberty" doesn't begin to capture the richness of the thought. It sounds kind

of Frenchified to me, and loses the direct connection to the United States. It moves us away from the idea that it's all about the President and his leadership of America. Let's blow it out. "Truth, justice and the American way."

James: I love it. That sounds super to me.

Lincoln: Super? (Stares, sighs and goes on reading.)

...and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Marsteller: Well, 'dedicated' seems a little weak. And we need to get back to that inclusivity thing again. Maybe "a shared commitment" – or even better, maybe "a team-based collective focus."

O'Hara: Either works for me.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. Either one.

O'Hara: Does anyone other than me think the word 'proposition' might be taken as a double entendre? Remember, General Hooker is beginning to have his name associated with the ladies of easy virtue that follow his army around. Some people might see this as some kind of allusion to that.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. When it comes to hookers, you have to play it safe.

Marsteller: Oh, I don't really think there's much of a risk of that. But I think we can kill two birds with one stone here. Even if there's the hooker thing to consider, this is stylistically wrong. Short, declarative sentences with simple words. That's the ticket for effective connection with an audience. These are busy people. They need information that they can get fast and absorb quickly. Now we're hitting them with a whole lot of thoughts and ideas and concepts in a single compound complex sentence of 30 words or more,

and a four-syllable word. What's wrong with plain and easy.... "Idea."

(Gestures with his hands as he speaks the word, as if presenting something to the group.)

Barnum: Or pick up on the team metaphor you just made. "Goal."

Spalding: I like it. Short. Punchy. Consistent imagery. Everybody gets a sports metaphor. Jerry.

Marsteller: We've already dealt with the sexist thing. "Men" obviously has to go. What about "everyone"... or make it really simple and easy: "we're all equal" - and to Cleve's earlier point, "we're all equal, especially under this administration."

Spalding: Done.

Bush: Is there a risk we'll get some egghead parsing the language and trying to make the rhetorical point that in fact we're all not really equal? Hey, I'm as egalitarian as the next guy. But we all know there are some real morons walking around out there.

James: And they all vote Democrat.

(General laughter. Lincoln's eyes widen as he stares at one person after another around the table.)

James: We've carried that political water already, Kyle. Don't worry about it.

Spalding: Mr. President?

(Lincoln stares as if an outside observer of what is unfolding before him. After a slight pause:)

Lincoln: Yes?

Spalding: Go on, Mr. President. We're really rolling now.

Lincoln: I'm not sure my presidency is long enough to finish this.

(Pause.)

Spalding: Mr. President, you're right. Point taken. We know how incredibly busy you are, and how precious time is to you. Plus, our collective hourly rate around this table no doubt would give your critics heartburn.

Let's speed this up as best we can. I think we've done a good job of establishing the guiding principles and criteria we want for this speech to work. Our creatives can pick up on that and work it throughout the text. They are really, really good. They've won seven Cleo awards, you know.

Lincoln: Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

O'Hara: Nice work, Mr. President. What you're really doing is asking a question of the audience. So let's set it up as one. Give 'em the question you want to answer, and then the answer you want them to take away.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. Completely. Absolutely the right frequency.

Lincoln: Frequency?

Marsteller: I think I have it.

"Can the government these brave boys who died here – and the women who loved and nurtured them – continue? You bet it can."

Lincoln: Nurtured?

Spalding: Positive. Assertive. Commanding. It's great.

Lincoln: We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

Marsteller: Frankly, we don't need it, Mr. President. What does it really add to the point you already made? It's obvious we're on a great battlefield. It's either fitting or proper, but I don't see why we need both.

Nobody sat on those iron train seats for hours or got saddle sores thinking they were going to Great Falls. If we have to say anything here, make it simple and easy. "They died. But the nation lives. Let's get on with it."

James: Yes. We don't want to give away all the credit here. Sure, a lot of people died. That makes me sad, and it's noble thing to do. But we can't afford to say anything that diminishes the really important role played by this president, this administration and the Republican Party in the achieving our real objective, which is... is.... is....

(Long, awkward silence.)

Marsteller: Preservation of the union and our innovative form of government, so on and so forth?

James: Right, preservation of the union.

(Nods all around. Except for Lincoln. He continues.)

Lincoln: But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate – we cannot consecrate – we cannot hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.

Marsteller: Whoa, that's a real mouthful. Plus, we have the 'dedicate' word again. I just don't like it. It's a buzzword to me...

overused, clichéd. “Consecrate” is three syllables. Why not just keep it simple and easy: “Bless?” Everybody knows that word.

Lincoln: Buzzword?

O’Hara: And get the sexist noun.

Spalding: Oh, sure.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. One hundred ten percent.

(Lincoln stares at Rather for a long second, then begins reading again.)

Lincoln: The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

James: No, no, no, no, no, no. Never disparage your accomplishments. Don’t trivialize what this ceremony celebrates – the triumph you engineered, no matter the sacrifice you had to make. Don’t denigrate your personal accomplishment. It took political courage. It took real leadership – *presidential* leadership. You don’t get that by just dragging a twenty dollar bill through a DC shantytown.

Spalding: Let’s think about this for a minute, Clete. From an image management point of view, that’s good stuff. It nails that modest persona the President like to project... that ‘Honest Abe’ character the President has built up. The Lincoln brand has real market equity. Let’s use it.

Lincoln: Image?

Bush: I get your point. But I'm with Cleve – still a touch uncomfortable giving away the credit store, so to speak. We should protect the brand.

Lincoln: Brand?

O'Hara: 'Leadership' is overused in the media. We need to play up the courage concept. Fits better when you typeset headlines, too.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. Courage.

Marsteller: Focus, people. Let's remember our objective here. You want the world to remember – but remember what? Not what they did, but "what was done here." It's intransitive, I know, but the shift will make it stand out all the more, and still get across the idea that this was a shared effort.

Bush: And I like the "unfinished" tie-in. That sets us up for the discussion of how critical it is for use to have a second term to get to the finish line.

(Harrumphs and nodding all around. Except Lincoln. He resumes reading. Voice gains strength and passion as he reads.)

Lincoln: It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

(Silence. Every person is motionless. Spalding speaks, breaking the mood sharply.)

Spalding: 'The great task remaining.' Love it. Looooove it. I think we have a title here. "The Great Task Remaining: If Not Lincoln, Then Whom?"

Lincoln: Who.

Spalding: Whatever.

James: Now wait a minute. We can use the title to set up our campaign slogan. How about "Love That Lincoln." Or something really catchy that draws in the urban vote. We've always played better rural. How about "Leap for Lincoln."

Marsteller: Clete, that's what we do for a living. In all modesty, we do it well, so let us do our job.

Those are interesting ideas, and I can see how they might appeal to someone outside our profession. But I can tell you right off the bat that they are not the best – not the standard we set for our work, or for our clients. Too formal. Too generic. Here's the brand insight: There are lots of Lincolns. But only one Abe. Why not make the second part something simple and easy. Maybe "Abe's the One." Or "I like Abe."

Mathers: Wouldn't Abraham be most dignified?

(Stunned, uncomfortable silence.)

James: Look, Jerry. There's no way we going to carry the Jewish vote. So using Abraham can only cost us votes outside New York. I just said we're already weak in the cities.

Barnum: I say go with Abe. Fits on the lapel button. Leverages the investment we're making here in nowhere-ville Pennsylvania for where it really will matter come election day.

Lincoln: Nowhere-ville?

Marsteller: One last thing. Don't you think that whole "of the people, by the people, for the people" stuff really is a bit over the top? The real idea is that *we're* for the people.

James: Right on, Brandon. And let's be frank about the politics here. We're raising funds for the election right now. It's tough out there. People aren't giving. Who is giving? Business, that's who. Businessmen provide the dollars we need for those lapel buttons, sandwich boards, cab fare for voters on election day, entertaining reporters and all that. When we start hammering away on this socialist stuff, we lose those guys. No bucks, no luck. No dough, no go. Put *that* on your button.

Lincoln: Cab fare?

Spalding: Jerry, make sure you get that point. The creatives can clean it up. Let's keep moving.

(Silence as all stare at Lincoln. After an uncomfortable few seconds, Spalding speaks.)

Spalding: That's it?

(Awkward silence.)

Lincoln: Well, yes.

(More silence.)

Marsteller: Then it's a darn good thing you have contracted with an STD. This is probably two minutes, even as slowly as you talk. It's more of a sound bite than a speech.

Lincoln: Sound bite?

Spalding: Sir, what Brandon is trying to say is this is a great speech *concept*. But it's not a speech. This draft would be over before the crowd stopped yawning and stretching from Everett's speech.

Barnum: We need a set up of some kind. Some recognition of the celebrities. Jokes probably wouldn't be right. We need to play the dignity card here. In any other situation like this, we would have to have a few humorous and topical ice-breakers to relax everybody and give them time to get in the spirit of things, to get focused....

Marsteller: Maybe a couple of anecdotes about you and your past... that log cabin stuff plays well... true Americana, just like personal sacrifice. It all ties together neatly.

Lincoln: Americana?

Marsteller: Sir, the point is, this has to be fleshed out... fleshed out a lot.

Barnum: Actually, Brandon, this may be perfect for us. It sets us up to get to the core messages. We use this sacrifice stuff to talk about all that Abe... oh, I apologize for being overly familiar, Mr. President. It's just that I feel like I know you so well - with all I've seen you do and all your administration has been able to accomplish in such a tough political environment. I'm jazzed about what great things lie ahead with a Republican administration and a Republican Congress.

That's the concept in my mind. The sacrifice made by these brave soldiers will have been for squat unless we re-elect the team that is saving the nation.

Spalding: *(Sotto voce.)* Oh, Bailey, that is sooo good.

Lincoln: Jazzed?

(Spalding continues aloud.)

Spalding: Yes, jazzed. Just think about it. We've turned the corner on the war. We're going to win this thing. That's all this administration's doing... getting those fine young boys lined

up and pointed toward the enemy, with the military leadership and the snappy uniforms and those long pointed things on their rifles. Mission accomplished.

Bush: Yes, and we have that whole emancipation thing going for us, too. The poll and focus group results are amazing. Don't forget that.

Lincoln: Focus group?

James: Talk about symbolism. Think about that big building down at the end of Pennsylvania Avenue. Did a little thing like 50,000 dead stop this administration from building a Capitol Building dome that the Pope wishes he had? We've mobilized the whole darn country and still kept a big government project running and reasonably on track.

That dome can be a symbol of this president and his ability to cut through gridlock to get things done. Even if it does look like a great big alabaster tit.

(General laughter.)

Lincoln: Tit?

Spalding: Let's not lose focus, people. All those ideas are great, and we can expand on them. We'll get our research group to come up with some raw material and have the creatives language up all these notes. They should be able to polish them into a real gem of a speech.

Barnum: I hate to prolong this, but the energy in this room is something special. How about one more idea – some real out-of-the box thinking. Maybe we build in some kind of break in the program to refresh and refocus. Something like a half-way stop on a journey.

Spalding: The half-way point in the program. I like that. I like that a lot. Give 'em some kind of break – a half-point show –

while the crowd goes to the toilets, or people go to get a beer or a latte.

Barnum: Run with me on this and we can take it a step further.

Lincoln: Farther.

Barnum: Whatever.

Let's give 'em some kind of diversion. Music. Fireworks. Some kind of short, light entertainment to take their mind off what others have said and get them back in the right mood... make them more receptive. And make sure they know the whole multi-media thing is there under OUR sponsorship.

Bush: Absolutely fantastic. But we need exactly the right kind of people. And we don't want anything vulgar or common in any of this. Remember, we have presidential dignity to preserve.

James: And no Democrats. Unless they have a lot of money.

Marsteller: Who is entertaining but not offensive? Well, let's get real here. We need somebody bland... lowest common denominator kind of entertainment. This is entertainment for the masses, after all.

Spalding: Plus, we can sell a few ads here and there. Top stuff, no down-market pocket buggy whips or patent medicines. If we do this right, we may be able to pay the freight for this whole thing and free up all that budget for the campaign.

Barnum: I'm not so sure I'd rule out that patent medicine. I still say there are some big bucks in snake oil, especially to the hicks and suckers.

Spalding: Focus, people. Let's get back to the idea of entertainment.

Barnum: There's the kid in New York named Kate Smith who might be good. Probably too young, not known well enough. Too sophisticated for a Pennsylvania venue and DC people. But a great American name.

O'Hara: Stay closer to home. Maybe we would be better off with that girl singer from that musical at the Ford Theater. Good voice. And she has this gimmick where she actually shows you her ankles and then explains it as an innocent costume malfunction.

Rather: I agree with Rhett. She would be perfect. Just perfect.

Barnum: Didn't she appear with Bob Hope at Manassas already? But anyway, we need to think bigger. What we really need to make this memorable is some kind of visual – a symbol of some kind that makes people feel good about what they are experiencing.

Marsteller: What you must understand, Mr. President, is that it's not just the words people hear that win them over. It's the entire experience.

Barnum: Brandon's right, sir. People will remember this because of all the things they hear and see... the crowds, the lights, the music, the action, the whole vibe. With due respect, Mr. President, it's not just the words we string together. And you've been under a lot of strain, and it shows. Your looks can't carry this. Your non-verbals are... well, below average.

Lincoln: Non-verbals?

(Awkward pause as the STD group looks at one another. Finally, Marsteller speaks.)

Marsteller: Mr. President. There is no other way to say this.

You're ugly.

(Another awkward pause.)

Marsteller: You just don't have 'the look.' You don't have any moves. There's no charisma there... no star power. Without it, you just can't connect with people. Look, why do you think Everett is the headliner, and you're on just before the closing hymn? You're the president, for God's sake, not Everett. And you get the guaranteed killer time slot.

Spalding: No one really wants to be the bearer of this message, sir. But you need to know it. And frankly, that's why your staff invited us here today. If you don't find a way to correct the whole physical appeal thing, you may be in very big trouble in '64.

Barnum: Hold it, hold it. I've got something. If we brand the whole day with some kind of symbol or icon, we can use it for other events, too - give the whole presidency and even the party something that will help deal with this whole charisma thing.

Lincoln: Leverage?

Barnum: What about an animal of some kind? Everyone loves animals.

Spalding: What kind of animal?

Barnum: Something that represents the spirit of what this event is all about ... and more important, what this president and the Republican Party stand for.

Spalding: What is that? Look, we've just been through some tough times. No one argues about that. People want peace... stability... strength... some time to reflect and get back to normal. It has to be something strong and solid... but distinctive, something just unusual enough to be memorable.

Hmmm.....

(Spalding rises and paces room non-stop. Places hands to temples, as if thinking deeply. Lincoln watches with blank look.)

Spalding: I'm seeing something exotic. Maybe a yak. Something like that.

Lincoln: Yak?

Spalding: (Sighs.) Well, we don't need to resolve this right now. Let's get back to the office and put a creative team on it.

James: Let's move on. But remember, everybody, those jackass Democrats will probably do the same thing, so let's not let any grass grow on these graves before we get this resolved.

Spalding: Okay, but make sure the notes capture the idea of the power and importance of subliminal messaging.

Lincoln: Subliminal?

Barnum: Don't worry, Captain. Jerry's scribbling away like a beaver.

Spalding: We need to fold this tent. We have another client pitch in twenty minutes, and you know how hard it is to hail a buggy these days.

Besides, I believe our work here is done. We have a ton of details to work through back at the office, so let's get back there and get to work. Let's touch calendars all around and find a date for our presentation of some more detailed multi-media directional concepts... of course drawn from the wonderful work the President already has done. It's a darn good start for us.

Barnum: This is going to be super... just super.

Lincoln: Super?

Spalding: One last suggestion, sir. Stop referring to this as an "address." Remember, 'address' means where someone lives. And no one can remember somebody else's address.

(His team laughs. Lincoln just stares silently.)

This is going to be so much more powerful than something called the Gardensburg Address. Pay attention to Brandon. Think of this as the Gardensburg *Experience*.

Lincoln: Gettysburg.

Spalding: Pardon?

Lincoln: It's Gettysburg. Not Gardensburg.

Spalding: Whatever. No one will remember that when we're done.

(Group rises and begins to exit. Alone in the room, Lincoln stands, stretches and twists his head and shoulders, slowly massaging the back of his neck, as his head slowly tilts forward on his chest. He gradually closes his eyes, and sighs heavily.)

Lincoln: Sometimes I wish someone would just shoot me.

House lights down. Curtain.

Finis