

Memoir of Lorain H. Cunningham, related to Battery D participation in 1949 Inaugural events, ca. 1970. Subject File, Lorain H. Cunningham Papers.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S INAUGURATION.

JANUARY 20, 1949.

On January 6, 1949 I received a letter from Roger Sermon telling me that Captain Truman had issued an invitation to all of his former buddies of Battery "D" 129th Field Artillery to be his personal guests at his Inauguration as President of the United States on January 20, 1949.

When I received this invitation I was setting up a new mine near Lenzburg and Mom was living in Morris, Illinois as I only expected to be away for two weeks. I called her and told her about the invitation and she thought I should go. I had another reason for going as Lynn was a Captain in the Air Force and was stationed in the Pentagon and was living in Alexandria and I would be able to visit with Lynn Alice and the three youngsters.

I went into St. Louis and met the gang that had a special Pullman reserved for the trip. We left St. Louis on January 18th and arrived in Washington D.C. early on the 19th. We were met by three Navy busses and taken to the Hamilton Hotel. These busses were to stay with us for three days and hauled us on all our trips. After arriving at the hotel we received our caps, canes, arm bands and a copy of our "General Orders". These orders gave us a very detailed outline of our schedule for our three days in Washington. Most of the men stayed at this hotel but I planned on spending my spare time with Lynn and his family so did not register in there. After getting our orders: Father Tiernan took most of the men to a Mass before lunch.

After lunch we were taken to the ballroom of the Shoreman Hotel where Governor Smith, of Missouri, had arranged a special reception for Truman and members of Battery "D". I might add here that at all the receptions, special events, etc. our gang was in the front row with the choice seats. We were really 'special guests'.

After dinner we were driven to the Armory for the Gala show. The program will show what great talent was made available for this event and of course we were up in front. Look this program over and see how good the show was.

On Thursday, January 20th, (Inauguration Day) we met in the Mayfair Hotel for a 6:30 breakfast and a real bull session that ran for about three hours. We were then taken to the Capitol Building to our special seats in front of the Inauguration stand where we watched the taking of the oath of office as President and then listened to the Address by Truman.

After the Inauguration ceremonies were over we went to our assigned place as Honor Guard for the President for the parade from the Capitol Building to the White House. After we passed the reviewing stand in front of the White House we dropped out and went to our seats in front of the stand. We watched the floats, marching bands and service units pass in review and then had to leave at 4:30 and go back to the hotel.

At 5:00 P.M. we were taken to the National Art Gallery for the big reception for President Truman. This one was for the VIP'S from all over the world. The big shots from the foreign countries were there with their medals, ribbons, uniforms, etc. During a bull session the night before someone asked if we were supposed to wear tuxedos as we knew this was a very formal affair. Most of us were there with our one every day suit so if tuxedos were in order we would have to rent one. One of the men suggested that we find out from Truman what we were expected to wear.

We sent a man up to find out and he came back with word from the President. He didn't care what we wore as long as we came with shoes on. You can imagine how a bunch of farmers, miners, small merchants, school teachers, etc. looked marching down the aisle between these VIP's in our "business" suits. We had the front two rows roped off as our special section.

At 6:30 most of the men went back to the hotel for dinner but Lynn was waiting for me so I went out for another short visit. Lynn brought me back in to the Armory at 9:30 P.M. for the Inaugural Ball. I asked Lynn to wait as I did not expect to stay very long. I had one dance with Kay Starr and watched the crowd for awhile and then slipped away. I learned later that I could have sold my ticket for a large sum as there were only 10,000 given out for the entire country and scalpers were doing a good business.

On Friday, January 21st, we met at the hotel and were taken on an escorted trip to Mt. Vernon, Alexandria, thru the Embassy area in Washington D.C. and thru several of the prominent buildings in and around the Capitol area. We returned at 3:30 with two more receptions on our schedule. One at 5:00 in the Wardman Park Hotel given by Secretary Snyder and one at 6:15 in the Shoreman Hotel given by Senator Howard McGrath for Truman and guests. I passed up both of these and went out to Lynn's. Lynn brought me back to the Union in time for our 10:55 PM. departure for home. This was certainly a fine three days and one that I will remember for a long time. I do not know how history will treat our Captain but I do know that as a man he is certainly a man of courage and a "Square Shooter".

P.S.

Just a short summary of events that happened in later years. Many of the old Battery members were given political jobs or helped in various ways but I had a good job with a coal company with a promising future so was not interested in a job. However, I did call for help twice.

The first time to get our tipple superintendent deferred as an essential man in an essential industry. The letter and reply are on another page.

The second time was when Lynn was on his way to the Philippine Islands with Alice and family and was detained in San Francisco. This letter and reply are shown on another page.

On November 3, 1952 members of Battery "D" met with the President in the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City for a 'farewell supper' before he left office in January. The pictures will tell most of the story.

On April 15, 1961 Mom and I were invited to attend the dedication ceremonies for the opening of the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri. We took my sister Harriette and her husband Roy as our guests. Chief Justice Warren gave the address and Thomas Hart Benton, artist, uncovered his beautiful mural.

Mom and I had a short letter of congratulations from Captain Truman on our 50th wedding anniversary on December 20, 1967.
