

SFChronicle

In Memory of Mr. Lincoln

By Mel Zeigler

It was roast beef, Ingle-nook and Watergate for San Francisco Republicans last night.

They filled up on the roast beef, drank themselves slightly giddy with the wine, and managed to put off the unappetizing topic of Watergate until after dessert.

The occasion, the annual Lincoln Day dinner sponsored by the Republicans county committee, drew a capacity crowd of 350 persons to the Sons of Italy Hall, 5051 Mission street.

The size of the crowd cheered many of the Republican dignitaries, including Supervisor John Molinari who told the audience that an unnamed Democratic Supervisor had chided him, "Where are they going to hold it (the dinner) this year? In a phone booth?"

Throughout most of the four and a half hour affair the hall was filled with the sounds of living conversations and tinkling ice cubes. Only after several futile minutes of rapping a spoon

against a glass was J. Max Moore, county chairman, able to bring order to the gathering.

"This certainly proves that Republicans do have fun," he observed, smiling.

The conservatively-clad crowd — men in dark suits and women in knee-length dresses — seemed to regard Abraham Lincoln's 165th birthday more as an opportunity for a spirited social gathering than a political occasion.

But the politicians finally got their chance after the ice cream. The featured speakers were Senator John L. Harmer of Glendale and John G. Veneman, former under secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, both candidates for the Republican nomination for Lieutenant Governor.

Veneman, who previewed his speech for a reporter as a "normal Lincoln Day dinner pitch," did not disappoint.

After his flowing tribute to Lincoln, Veneman brought things up to date by adding "The events of 1973 will no cause defeat in 1974. Only pessimism and apathy can keep us from victory."

Notably, President Nixon's name was not once mentioned from the podium by any speaker.

But then again maybe nobody even noticed. "It's fantastic," observed one jubilant celebrant, a committee official, "when a bunch of people can get together like this and get drunk."