

True and literal meaning is lent to the phrase “brothers in arms” by **Lincoln Bynum (1900-1977)** and his older brother Edward, who served in France as fellow soldiers of Company K of the all-black 370<sup>th</sup> United States Infantry during World War I—the only unit to be commanded entirely by black officers. Segregated units were often led by white officers. Both brothers saw battle from the trenches, but lived to return home to Bloomington at the end of the war.

Lincoln J. Bynum was born on January 22, 1900 in Bloomington, IL. He was one of eight children born to Edward Wesley and Mary (Smith) Bynum.<sup>1</sup>

Though Bynum’s father Edward W. served as a cook in Company G of the Eighth Illinois Regiment, Illinois National Guard, when Lincoln was a child, the Bynums’ was not a military household.<sup>2</sup> However, little is known about Lincoln or his brothers prior to his and Edward’s registration for the draft in June 1917.<sup>3</sup> The Bynum family moved within the city fairly regularly while Lincoln was growing up. From 1895 to 1917, Bynum’s family lived at no less than seven separate addresses in Bloomington.<sup>4</sup> Bynum’s father, Edward Sr., was employed as a waiter or a janitor in a variety of places. He worked as a janitor at City Hall when his two sons were sent overseas.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of his enlistment, Lincoln (or Link as he was known to some) was employed at the Illinois Hotel on Jefferson Street in Bloomington.<sup>6</sup> Unlike his brother Edward who found fairly consistent work as a porter before and after the war, Lincoln worked at a wide number of jobs over the years: including janitor (Illinois Hotel, the *Pantagraph*, Steak ‘n Shake, Clay Dooley, etc.), jobber, car washer, shoe shiner, and police automobile driver.<sup>7</sup>

War had been waging in Europe since July 1914, but on April 6, 1917, Congress effectively abandoned the United States’ policy of neutrality by declaring war on Germany. The country was ill equipped to furnish an army large enough to fight a war overseas. In order to raise any army, Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1917 in May of that year, which enabled the federal government to order young men into the Army and Navy. Bynum, being a man aged 21 to 30, registered in June and was mobilized as a member of the segregated Chicago-based Eighth Illinois Regiment, Illinois National Guard, in July.<sup>8</sup>

On July 27, 1917, the cars of the 6 p.m. interurban bound for Peoria were loaded with the recently mobilized men of the Eighth. As the *Pantagraph* noted, with only a few hours notice of their mobilization, the 68 men were not a “very soldierly looking congregation,” but were “full of life and the spirit of adventure.”<sup>9</sup> Mostly composed of men from Bloomington, the regiment also received men from Pontiac, Clinton, and elsewhere to satisfy the immediate need for

<sup>1</sup> “Lincoln Bynum,” *Pantagraph*, August 2, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> “Soldiers of Company G,” *Pantagraph*, September 12, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> “Registration Card: Edward Daniel Bynum,” June 5, 1917, Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Bloomington-Normal City Directories: 1895, 1899, 1902, 1905, 1909, 1911, 1913.

<sup>5</sup> Bloomington-Normal City Directory, 1917; At the time, City Hall was located at the corner of N. East and E. Monroe streets, what is today the south half of the Frontier Communications building. *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Bloomington-Normal City Directories: 1920, 1923, 1924; “Clay Dooley, Inc.,” *Pantagraph*, May 20, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> Bill Kemp, “PFOP: ‘Black Devils’ Earned Fame in WWI,” *Pantagraph*, April 30, 2017; Edward E. Pierson and J.L. Hasbrouck, *McLean County in the World War, 1917-1918* (Bloomington, IL: McLean County War Publishing Company, 1921), 202. Originally formed during the Spanish American War to serve as an occupation force in Cuba, the Eighth Illinois was re-designated the 370<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division upon the U.S. entering WWI.

<sup>9</sup> “Cheer Colored Boys Off to the Front,” *Pantagraph*, July 27, 1917; A later report published upon the unit’s return to the United States following the end of the war indicated that 62 men from “Bloomington and vicinity” belonged to the regiment. “Bloomington Colored Men Arrive From France,” *Pantagraph*, February 10, 1919.

soldiers.<sup>10</sup> Two special cars had been prepared to transport the troops, who boarded the train prior to it pulling into the Bloomington station.<sup>11</sup> The cars only lingered in the station for a few minutes, just long enough for friends and family to shout farewells from the platform and for the soldiers inside to stick their heads, hands, and sometimes “the greater part of their bodies,” outside the windows to shake hands, shared kisses, and yell their own final goodbyes to those who had gathered to see them off.<sup>12</sup> After arriving in Peoria, the men trained for roughly ten weeks before being sent to the newly constructed Camp Logan in Houston, Texas.

Tensions were high in Houston when the Eighth arrived at Camp Logan on October 12. Back in July, members of the all-black Twenty-Fourth United States Infantry Regiment had been ordered to guard the construction site of the new camp. In the eyes of the local residents and law enforcement, however, the arrival of the armed Twenty-Fourth in the then-segregated city was less than welcome. Hostilities intensified when a rumor that a black soldier had been killed by white police officers incited a riot between white civilians living in the city and 156 black soldiers stationed there.<sup>13</sup> Four black soldiers and sixteen white civilians were killed during the riot. All 156 soldiers were court-martialed, nineteen of whom were executed. As a result of the incident, animosity against blacks was palpable at the time the Eighth arrived.<sup>14</sup>

After an almost five-month stay in Texas, the unit left for Newport News, Virginia in March 1918, and from there arrived in France on April 22, 1918—whereupon the unit’s arrival, the Eighth was re-designated 370<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the segregated 93<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. Like the Eighth, the 370<sup>th</sup> had the distinction of being the only regiment in the U.S. Army that was led entirely by black officers. Seven days after their arrival in France, Bynum and his fellow members of the 370<sup>th</sup> began training with French soldiers in Drandvillars.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the majority of African American units that were relegated to support positions, members of the 370<sup>th</sup> saw combat. According to an account relayed by Sergeant Major James L. Page, the regiment was “with the best division of the French army during this time.”<sup>16</sup> First Sergeant Eugene De Forest Love had “good word[s] for the French people and their cordial treatment of the colored troops,” implying that “not anything is banned to them that belongs to France.”<sup>17</sup>

In his writing on the subject, renowned author W.E.B. Du Bois comments on the clear racist motivations of white American soldiers in their treatment of their fellow black soldiers and the desire to remove black soldiers from the influence of the French as soon as possible.<sup>18</sup> There were active attempts on the part of the American military to discredit the efforts of the black soldiers fighting abroad. As Du Bois quotes from a conversation he overheard between three American soldiers and two French soldiers, one of the American officers suggested that “they had no use for ‘n\*\*\*\*\*s’ in the United States, and were only trying them out in the war.”<sup>19</sup> According to the officer, “they had proved themselves a bunch of cowards, and that every one of

<sup>10</sup> Pierson and Hasbrouck, 202.

<sup>11</sup> “Cheer Colored Boys Off to the Front,” *Pantagraph*, July 27, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Texas State Historical Association, “Houston Riot of 1917,”

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jch04>, Date accessed September 11, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Jim Hill, “The 370<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Chicago’s 8<sup>th</sup> Illinois National Guard in WWI,” *The Western Front*

*Association*, <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/great-war-on-land/75-other-war-theatres/55-370-infantry.html>

<sup>15</sup> “Colored Veterans to Receive Hearty Welcome,” *Pantagraph*, February 27, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> “Colored Officer in Praise of His Soldiers,” *Daily Pantagraph*, February 7, 1919.

<sup>18</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Negro Soldier in Service Abroad During the First World War,” in *The Journal of Negro Education* 13, no. 3 (Summer, 1943), 324-25.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

the ----- would rape a white woman if he was not held down by the whites.”<sup>20</sup> In contrast, the French officers had “nothing but the highest of praise for their black soldiers...and the work that they had done.”<sup>21</sup>

After roughly six weeks of training under the tutelage of the French Army, on June 23 the unit was sent into the trenches near Regonville, where they remained for one week before relocating to the trenches at Vraincourt.<sup>22</sup> After ten days, on August 16, the unit left for the front at Verdun and were back in the trenches by September 14.<sup>23</sup> For two weeks, the unit was subjected to heavy shelling and gas attacks.<sup>24</sup>

Trench warfare was the dominant method of fighting during WWI. Typical trenches were designed in a system of two to four parallel lines, each line approximately one mile to the rear of the front or next line.<sup>25</sup> All trenches were dug in a zig-zag pattern to prevent enemy fire from traveling more than a few yards down the trench if the shooter was standing at the end.<sup>26</sup> Each main line trench was connected by perpendicular communication trenches, through which information and supplies were exchanged.<sup>27</sup> Trenches were often reinforced with sandbags and topped with coils of barbed wire, and lined with wooden planks at the bottom.<sup>28</sup> Enemy trenches were usually located anywhere between fifty and 250 yards apart, separated by what was often referred to as “no man’s land.”<sup>29</sup> This “no man’s land” belonged to neither side, was open to frequent artillery barrages, and was the site of many deaths. The trenches were cramped, muddy, and often times filled with water. Machine gunfire, mortar, and gas attacks were all commonplace.

Lincoln was once described by his older brother Edward as a “card,” as he recalled a time when one night while stationed in France, German airplanes were “trying to locate us and were dropping bombs all around us.” Some of the men began to retreat to the trenches when Lincoln said, “What is the matter with you guys? If you are scared you ought to join the church.”<sup>30</sup>

As exemplified by Lincoln’s attitude in combat, the men of the 370<sup>th</sup> were referred to by the French as “Partridges” for their cockiness and pride in battle. But among enemy German soldiers, the men of the 370<sup>th</sup> earned an even more serious moniker—the “Black Devils.”<sup>31</sup> Though speaking to the unit’s courage and ferocity, this loaded term speaks also to the larger situation black American soldiers found themselves in, well into the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> Until 1948, when President Harry Truman ordered the desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, black

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Pierson and Hasbrouck, 202-203; *Pantagraph*, February 27, 1919.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>24</sup> *Pantagraph*, February 27, 1919.

<sup>25</sup> “Trench Warfare,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/trench-warfare>, Date accessed September 8, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> “World War I: Trench Warfare,” [http://www.ducksters.com/history/world\\_war\\_i/trench\\_warfare.php](http://www.ducksters.com/history/world_war_i/trench_warfare.php), Date accessed September 8, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “Corporal Bynum Has Been Very Busy Fighting,” *Pantagraph*, January 7, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> William Allison Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War* (Project Gutenberg: 2005), Chapter XVI, e-book <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16598/16598-h/16598-h.htm>, Date accessed September 13, 2017; Shawn SanRoman, *The Eighth Illinois Volunteers: a Brief Regimental History of an African-American Unit* (Bloomington, IL: McLean County Historical Society, 1998), 8.

<sup>32</sup> The French on the other hand, referred to the men of the 370<sup>th</sup> as “Partridges” because of their cockiness and pride in battle. Whatever nickname they went by, they clearly demonstrated their abilities as soldiers and fought valiantly in battle up until the very last day of the War.

soldiers were only allowed to serve in all-black units.<sup>33</sup> Though these men could be ordered to mobilize and serve on behalf of their nation in a world-encompassing conflict the likes of which was then unknown, the same men could not fight for their country alongside their white comrades-in-arms. As is known, such instances of racial inequality were not relegated to the front lines, and continued to color the experience of blacks—Bynum included—in America throughout the twentieth century and beyond. On December 23, 1942, Bynum wrote a letter to the editor of the *Pantagraph*, titled “Negroes Forgotten,” with the intent to bring the readership’s attention to recent Associated Press reports published on the loss of life in a Boston fire, and the inverse absence of any such reporting on a fire in Natchez, Mississippi two years previously in which more than 200 people perished.<sup>34</sup> Bynum went on to ask, “Could it be that where Negroes are the victims, no record of a disaster is kept by the Associated Press?”<sup>35</sup> In Bynum’s words:

“It is the small things like this, often repeated, that make the colored people of this country feel that they are the forgotten part of this democracy, to be considered only when some dire calamity threatens its existence, and even then the remembrance is one of studied reluctance.”<sup>36</sup>

When the war ended on November 11, 1918—203 days after Bynum and his unit arrived in France—the 370th was still in pursuit of the Germans, having pushed them back to the Belgian border. For their distinguished service, many men in the 370th received medals and awards from both the French and American governments. All totaled, the unit received almost 100 medals including twenty-one American Distinguished Service Crosses, several Croix de Guerre (France’s highest honor), sixty-eight French War Crosses, and one French Distinguished Service Medal. Many of those men who were decorated for their service gave their lives as well. Twenty percent, or ninety-six men total, were killed in the 370th.<sup>37</sup>

Though the armistice was signed in November 1918, return to normalcy was nowhere near immediate. For Lincoln and the 370th, life continued abroad until February. During this time, however, France tried to make its appreciation known. Prior to the unit’s departure, French General Vinedon issued a statement commending the 370th for their bravery and commitment to the cause which stated that “the blood of your comrade’s fell on the soil of France mixed with the blood of our soldiers, renders indissoluble the bonds of affection that unite us. We have besides, the pride of having worked together at a magnificent task, the pride of bearing on our foreheads the ray of a common grandeur.”<sup>38</sup> The unit landed in New York on February 9.<sup>39</sup>

According to the *Pantagraph*, no floors or windows at City Hall could have been dirty enough to keep Edward W. Sr. from meeting his sons. On February 17 the men of the 370th

<sup>33</sup> “Executive Order 9981,” <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/9981.htm>

<sup>34</sup> “Negroes Forgotten,” *Pantagraph*, December 23, 1942.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> E.J. Scott, “The American Negro in the World War, Chapter XV,” <http://www.gwpda.org/>, Date accessed September 9, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> W. Allison Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War* (Chicago: G.G. Sapp, 1919; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 155, e-book <https://archive.org/stream/historyamerican00sweegoog#page/n196/mode/2up>, Date accessed September 9, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

arrived in Chicago, after returning to the states from France by way of New York City.<sup>40</sup> More so than “pride of race and color,” Edward Sr. was motivated by a longing for his sons to be home.<sup>41</sup> After finding his sons in the crowd, the trio shared a two-hour visit before being treated to the “dazzling” welcome the city of Chicago had planned for the nation’s “crack negro regiment.”<sup>42</sup> The large crowds prevented any dancing to be done at a reception at the Chicago Coliseum, but members of the 370<sup>th</sup> paraded through the streets before returning to Camp Grant near Rockford, IL where the regiment officially mustered out on February 24.<sup>43</sup>

The return of the members of Machine Gun Company 3 (of which Edward was a member) of the 370<sup>th</sup> to Bloomington on February 27, 1919 marked the largest single body of returning soldiers of one unit from Europe to Bloomington.<sup>44</sup> To celebrate the occasion, the Association of Commerce prepared an evening program complete with a parade downtown, a banquet at the Wayman A.M.E. Church, and a public program at the Bloomington Coliseum, which began with a series of speeches from public officials and concluded with dancing until midnight.<sup>45</sup> Mayor E.E. Jones delivered a welcome, followed by a response from the Honorable Adelbert H. Roberts, a state representative from Chicago, who in 1924 became the first black state senator in Illinois.<sup>46</sup> In line with the *Pantagraph*’s urging that it was “the duty of the Bloomington people to join in this celebration and give these heroes a welcome,” Roberts stated that he was glad to see the “best white people join the best black people of the city in a welcome for these ‘Black Devils,’” for a “government that is great and grand enough to carry democracy over the seas ... is great enough to spread it to the colored race at home.”<sup>47</sup> Roberts went on to encourage greater cooperation between white and black citizens, suggesting that the “accomplishments of his race in the war will do much to bring it about.”<sup>48</sup> In addition to the mayor and Roberts, speakers included Dr. Eugene Covington, a local black physician; Bloomington attorney and Jewish civil rights leader Sigmund Livingston; and Wayman minister Henry Simons.<sup>49</sup> Edward Sr., the Bynums’ father, served on the speakers committee for the event.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the warm welcome home and the optimistic sentiments of people such as Roberts, black U.S. soldiers returned to a society still predicated on prejudice and discrimination. The extent of their service was largely undervalued in comparison to the efforts of their white counterparts—so much so that black ex-servicemen were barred from joining “white” veteran organizations such as the local Louis E. Davis Post 56 of the American Legion in Bloomington, founded in June 1919.<sup>51</sup> As a result, twenty-two men—including Bynum’s brother Edward—gathered on February 18, 1920 at the club of the Louis E. Davis Post at 309½ Main Street in

---

<sup>40</sup> “Bynum Welcomes ‘Black Devils’ Back in Chicago,” *Pantagraph*, February 18, 1919.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. “Edward Bynum Greets His Soldier Boys in Chicago,” *Pantagraph*, February 19, 1919.

<sup>43</sup> “City to Welcome Her Colored Warriors,” *Pantagraph*, February 25, 1919.

<sup>44</sup> “Colored Veterans to Receive Hearty Welcome,” *Pantagraph*, February 27, 1919.

<sup>45</sup> “Plans for Welcome of Colored Troops Made,” *Pantagraph*, February 22, 1919; *Pantagraph*, February 27, 1919.

<sup>46</sup> “Colored Veterans to Receive Hearty Welcome,”

*Pantagraph*, February 22, 1919; “Bloomington Honors Famous ‘Black Devils,’” *Pantagraph*, February 28, 1919.

<sup>48</sup> *Pantagraph*, February 28, 1919.

<sup>49</sup> Kemp, “PFOP: ‘Black Devils’ Earned Fame in WWI.”

<sup>50</sup> *Pantagraph*, February 22, 1919.

<sup>51</sup> Lisa Dretske, “Private Gus Williams,” 2009. <http://mchistory.org/research/resources/gus-williams.php>, Date Accessed September 11, 2017. The Louis E. Davis Post 56 was the first post of the American Legion to be founded in McLean County. Pierson and Hasbrouck, 274.

Bloomington to organize their own colored American Legion post—so named the Stevenson-Lewis Post after two of their fallen comrades, David Stevenson and Harry Lewis.<sup>52</sup> Stevenson, a former sergeant in the 370<sup>th</sup> was killed by shell fire on the Verdun front as the unit advanced toward the Belgian border.<sup>53</sup> Lewis, on the other hand, never made it to the front, as he died of double pneumonia prior to the unit being sent to Texas for training.<sup>54</sup> The post was to be “known in the future as an organization of colored civilians who served the country during the great war.”<sup>55</sup> Almost exactly three years later, Lincoln helped his brother repeat this process with a slightly expanded group of men, who possessed similar intentions.<sup>56</sup>

On February 5, 1923, more than thirty black veterans (including Bynum) gathered at the Griesheim Building in downtown Bloomington to organize the colored American Legion post, Redd-Williams Post 163—named for John Redd and Gus Williams, two other fellow veterans who perished during the First World War.<sup>57</sup> Williams, like Stevenson, was killed on the frontlines at Verdun.<sup>58</sup> Redd was seriously wounded in battle, but died later from his injuries.<sup>59</sup> The Ladies’ Auxiliary to the post was launched one year later in 1924.<sup>60</sup> Bynum’s mother Mary was elected president and Bynum’s sister-in-law Bessie (Thompson) served as secretary.<sup>61</sup> Bynum’s brother Edward served as post-sergeant-at-arms, vice commander, and commander during his time with the post.<sup>62</sup> Over the years, Lincoln served as historian, and on the employment and finance committees for the post.<sup>63</sup>

For most of its history, the Redd-Williams post was without a permanent facility for its members. The post did meet regularly in the basement of the McBarnes Memorial Building on Grove Street in Bloomington, the permanent address of the Louis E. Davis post, until fire damaged the building in September 1972.<sup>64</sup> Following the fire, the McLean County Board accepted the Davis post’s sale of its leasehold interest in the building for \$94,000 (roughly \$540,000 in 2016 dollars)—with the agreement that the post provide space at its future headquarters for other veterans’ organizations in the county.<sup>65</sup> More than a year later, members of the still homeless Redd-Williams post complained that the post had received no money from the sale of the lease, accusing the Davis post of breaking its promise to provide funds for a new location.<sup>66</sup> Members of the Davis post responded to the accusations, saying that no promise had

---

<sup>52</sup> “Colored Post of Legion Named,” *Pantagraph*, February 19, 1920.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> It is not known by the author when the Stevenson-Lewis post disbanded, but there is no record of the post in the *Pantagraph* after 1921.

<sup>57</sup> “Local Colored Men Form Legion Post,” *Pantagraph*, February 7, 1923; “How Time Flies: 75 Years Ago,” *Pantagraph*, February 6, 1988.

<sup>58</sup> “To Hold Funeral of Gus Williams Sunday,” *Pantagraph*, January 1, 1921.

<sup>59</sup> Pierson and Hasbrouck, 203.

<sup>60</sup> “Auxiliary of Redd-Williams Post Holds Its Annual Election,” *Pantagraph*, April 10, 1924.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.; “Bynum-Thompson Marriage,” *Pantagraph*, March 28, 1924.

<sup>62</sup> “Local colored Men Form Legion Post,” *Pantagraph*, February 7, 1923; “Redd-Williams Post Elects New Officers,” *Pantagraph*, December 10, 1926; “Bynum Again Heads Redd-Williams Post,” *Pantagraph*, October 2, 1930.

<sup>63</sup> *Pantagraph*, December 10, 1926; “Post to Install New Officers: Edward Bynum New Commander of Legionnaires,” *Pantagraph*, August 31, 1941; “S.H. Matthews Commander of Redd-Williams,” *Pantagraph*, July 23, 1944.

<sup>64</sup> “Legion post buys old S&H store,” *Pantagraph*, February 4, 1976.

<sup>65</sup> “Post says promise broken,” *Pantagraph*, October 10, 1974.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

been made regarding a payout and that such a decision would have to be submitted to the post's board.<sup>67</sup> Claims circulated that offerings of \$1,000 to \$3,000 (less than \$5,000 to \$15,000 in 2016 dollars) had been made by the Davis post to Redd-Williams, and that the latter had either rejected the offers or countered with figures closer to \$20,000 (or close to \$100,000 in 2016 dollars).<sup>68</sup> The concern on the part of the Redd-Williams post was that the post had already begun preparations to secure a permanent location on Main Street with the knowledge that some funding would be coming from the Davis post.<sup>69</sup> Though the Redd-Williams Post never saw payment from the sale of the lease of the McBarnes building, in January 1975 the Davis post offered the members Redd-Williams temporary use of a room at their new permanent location at 108 E. Market Street in Bloomington and contributed \$500 to the Redd-Williams' fund drive for a permanent location of their own.<sup>70</sup>

On July 1, 1976, members of the Redd-Williams Post 163 opened their new headquarters at 529 N. Main Street in Bloomington—the former S&H Green Stamp Store.<sup>71</sup> However, after suffering recent drops in membership, the Redd-Williams Post disbanded three years later in 1979.<sup>72</sup> Afterwards some black veterans joined the then-integrated Carl S. Martin American Legion Post 635—founded in Normal in 1928 expressly as an alternative to the Louis E. Davis Post.<sup>73</sup>

Apart from the post and their common military experience, Lincoln and Edward, as well as their brother Eugene, shared an aptitude for athletics—particularly basketball. While stationed at Camp Logan in Houston before leaving for France, the *Pantagraph* reported that both Edward and Lincoln had made a “great hit in the athletic work that the army [was] producing,”—in this case, referring to the brothers' contributions to the army basketball league.<sup>74</sup> At the time of the article, the Bynums and their fellow players had won twenty-two straight games.<sup>75</sup> After the war, Lincoln offered his skills as a guard and coach to the Bloomington Buffaloes—a local all-black basketball team managed by his brother Edward.<sup>76</sup>

As the Buffaloes played both black and white teams, it is not surprising that the team—Lincoln included—found themselves playing defense off the court at least once. On Tuesday, December 19, 1922, the Bloomington Buffaloes defeated the San Jose Triple A's 29 to 11 on the court of the Bloomington High School gymnasium.<sup>77</sup> In preparation for the game, the *Pantagraph* reported that “the visitors are represented with some of the fastest basketball players in semi-pro circles and the locals will be forced to travel at a fast pace to register a win with

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “25 Years Ago,” *Pantagraph*, January 6, 2000; “Fund drive hits \$1,000,” *Pantagraph*, April 23, 1975.

<sup>71</sup> “25 Years Ago,” *Pantagraph*, July 1, 2001.

<sup>72</sup> “May We Always Remember: Redd-Williams American Legion Post in Bloomington,” *Pantagraph*, May 29, 1994.

<sup>73</sup> “B-N vets: Army integration slow process,” *Pantagraph*, November 8, 1988; “Back Then: American Legion Recruiting,” *Pantagraph*, February 8, 1998.

<sup>74</sup> “Bynum Boys Making Good: Colored Soldiers From This City Make Hit in Athletic Stunts,” *Pantagraph*, February 15, 1918.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> “Buffaloes Wallop San Jose Quintet,” *Pantagraph*, December 20, 1922; “Bloomington's Crack Colored Basketball Five,” *Pantagraph*, January 12, 1923.

<sup>77</sup> *Pantagraph*, December 20, 1922; “San Jose Will Refuse to Meet Buffaloes Now,” *Pantagraph*, December 25, 1922.

them.”<sup>78</sup> Five days later, on December 24, the *Pantagraph* reported that San Jose would refuse to meet the Buffaloes in any further matches due to their failure to appear at their last scheduled game on Thursday, December 21.<sup>79</sup> The paper reported that a large crowd had assembled for the game and was disappointed by the unexplained cancellation.<sup>80</sup> In response, the Buffaloes published a statement on December 27 that stated that there was “good reason” for cancelling the game as the team had received threats following their win on December 19 that the defeated Triple A’s were planning to have the Buffaloes “beaten up” and “chased out of town.”<sup>81</sup> On December 30, San Jose issued their own statement defending the character of the town, saying, “No visiting team at San Jose has received anything but the most courteous treatment from players and public. The games are played in the First M.E. church gymnasium. No rough tactics are allowed.”<sup>82</sup> The statement went on to claim that contact had been made with Manager Bynum by phone prior to the game, and that he had stated the team had left for San Jose around 4:30 p.m. that afternoon.<sup>83</sup> After the team failed to appear, several more calls were made to Bynum with no reply.<sup>84</sup> The *Pantagraph* last reported on the story on December 29, writing that San Jose was “indignant” over the charges made by the Buffaloes and were “willing to meet the colored boys on [a] neutral floor.”<sup>85</sup> Though Lincoln’s basketball career never went beyond the Bloomington Buffaloes, his later career did intersect at least once with a former teammate—Eli White.

In August 1932, Bynum was appointed automobile driver for the Bloomington police.<sup>86</sup> As a driver, Bynum was at times involved in police action—including being one of three responders to a rally protesting the suspension of relief efforts on the part of the Bloomington Civic Relief Committee due to budgetary concerns in August 1932.<sup>87</sup> In this way, Bynum was not unlike his father. In May 1917, Bynum’s father Edward W. Sr., was credited with fourteen arrests while working as a janitor at City Hall.<sup>88</sup> However, on June 2, 1933, the City approved the appointment of Robert Eli White as police auto driver in place of Lincoln.<sup>89</sup> In protest, Lincoln’s brother Edward organized the signing of a petition arguing against White’s appointment for the reason that he had been a resident of Bloomington for less than four years.<sup>90</sup> In a *Pantagraph* report, Edward accused White of voting the Republican ticket in Normal in the last election, before moving to Bloomington to secure a job under the Democratic administration.<sup>91</sup> Edward went on to specify that White resided on Cypress Street in Normal and had only recently moved to his father’s house on Prairie Street in Bloomington.<sup>92</sup> On June 9, Alderman Harry Marquardt

---

<sup>78</sup> “Buffaloes Prepared for San Jose,” *Pantagraph*, December 19, 1922.

<sup>79</sup> *Pantagraph*, December 25, 1922.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*; One report cites that a \$65 house turned out for the game, at \$0.35 a ticket. “San Jose Presents Its Side of Controversy,” *Pantagraph*, December 30, 1922; “Tonight Basketball: San Jose vs. Buffaloes,” *Pantagraph*, December 19, 1922.

<sup>81</sup> “Game Was Called Off When Trouble Brewed,” *Pantagraph*, December 27, 1922.

<sup>82</sup> *Pantagraph*, December 30, 1922.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> “San Jose Quintet is Winner Over Mason City,” *Pantagraph*, December 29, 1922.

<sup>86</sup> “Wagon Driver Appointed,” *Pantagraph*, August 6, 1932.

<sup>87</sup> “Relief Is Suspended, With Food Excepted as Funds Run Low,” *Pantagraph*, August 21, 1932.

<sup>88</sup> “Arrests By Officers,” *Pantagraph*, May 4, 1917.

<sup>89</sup> “Protest Announced Over Appointment of Police Auto Driver,” *Pantagraph*, June 9, 1933.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*



presented the 250-signature strong petition to the city council, after which the city agreed to launch a full investigation into White's eligibility.<sup>93</sup> On June 30, the Council voted eight to six in favor of White's appointment to the position of driver.<sup>94</sup>

Despite no longer being employed by the police department, it seems Bynum's run in with criminals was not limited to his time in law enforcement. In this case, however, Bynum found himself on the victim's side of the encounter. On August 14, 1939, Bynum, then employed as a janitor at the Main Street location of Steak 'n Shake in Normal, was ordered to the floor at gunpoint during a shift by two men robbing the establishment.<sup>95</sup> Bynum, the only employee on duty at the time, was unable to provide a detailed description of the assailants, who escaped with \$518 in cash from a "secret cache" in the room.<sup>96</sup> Police chief C.Y. Yates believed the robbers had prior knowledge about where the money was stored. Bynum told police that he did not know about the location of the funds.<sup>97</sup>

After a continuing series of odd jobs, Bynum found steady employment in 1962 and finished his varied career as a janitor at Clay Dooley Inc. tire store, located at 216 E. Grove Street, until his retirement in 1975.<sup>98</sup>

If Lincoln's legacy is to be extended beyond his military service and general employment mishaps, one must look to his marriage to Laura Clark on April 9, 1922 and the birth of their two daughters Madilyn and Bernyce—who between them gave birth to nine children.<sup>99</sup> On May 12, 1945, the Bynums hosted Bernyce's wedding to Coxswain William M. Gaines of Bloomington at their home on 915 E. Empire Street.<sup>100</sup> Madilyn married Arthur Lewis Garrison on May 15, 1948 in Bloomington.<sup>101</sup> Garrison was the first black plumber on staff at both Illinois State University and University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.<sup>102</sup> The couple had four children.<sup>103</sup>

Lincoln Bynum died on July 31, 1977 at the age of 77.<sup>104</sup> He was survived by Laura, his wife of 55 years; his two daughters, Mrs. Madilyn Garrison and Mrs. Bernyce Gaines, both of Detroit, Michigan; nine grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.<sup>105</sup> Two brothers (one of them Edward) and, according to his obituary, a third daughter preceded him in death.<sup>106</sup> Lincoln Bynum is buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

Laura survived her husband Lincoln by almost 20 years, dying at the age of 94 on February 25, 1994.<sup>107</sup> At the time of her death, Bynum was residing in Detroit with her daughter Madilyn. Along with Madilyn, Bynum was survived by nine grandchildren, twenty-four great-

---

<sup>93</sup> "Appointment Query Voted: Council Follows Suggestion In Petition Protesting New Driver," *Pantagraph*, June 10, 1933.

<sup>94</sup> "Driver's Bond Gets Approval," *Pantagraph*, July 1, 1933.

<sup>95</sup> "Bandits Obtain \$518 in Holdup Of Restaurant," *Pantagraph*, August 14, 1939.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Pantagraph*, May 20, 1969; Bloomington-Normal Directory, 1975.

<sup>99</sup> "Lincoln Bynum," *Pantagraph*, August 2, 1977.

<sup>100</sup> "Miss Bynum Is Betrothed," *Pantagraph*, May 9, 1945.

<sup>101</sup> Marriage License, Arthur L. Garrison to Madilyn Bynum, 15 May 1948, McLean County, Illinois. County Clerks Office, Bloomington, IL.

<sup>102</sup> "Obituary for Mr. Arthur Lewis Garrison," <http://www.pyefuneralhome.com/obituaries/Arthur-Garrison/#!/Obituary>, Date Accessed September 10, 2017.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> "Lincoln Bynum," *Pantagraph*, August 2, 1977.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> "Laura Bynum," *Pantagraph*, March 1, 1994.

grandchildren, and nine great-great-grandchildren.<sup>108</sup> The funeral service was held at Wayman A.M.E. Church in Bloomington, of which she was a member. Bynum served as a steward of the church, once organizing a week-long series of lectures and programs held in celebration of “Negro History Week.”<sup>109</sup> Bynum’s son-in-law Arthur served alongside her as an elected trustee.<sup>110</sup> Arthur, being a navy veteran, was also active in the Redd-Williams Post like his father-in-law—serving as both vice-commander and Boy Scout chairman.<sup>111</sup> Laura Bynum is buried next to Lincoln in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.<sup>112</sup>

By: Hannah E. Johnson, 2017

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> “Church to Celebrate Negro History Week,” *Pantagraph*, February 7, 1975.

<sup>110</sup> “Wayman Church Names Officers for Fiscal Year,” *Pantagraph*, October 22, 1956.

<sup>111</sup> “George Jamison Redd-Williams Post Leader,” *Pantagraph*, July 27, 1949.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.