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Stevenson III speaks at ISU

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NORMAL - Former U.S. Sen. Adlai E. Stevenson III came bearing gifts, both words and mementos, at Illinois State University on Thursday.

He talked about the political values he was raised on; presented the university's president with a framed letter written by one of its founders, Jesse Fell; and gave Greg Koos, McLean County Museum of History executive director, an historic flag.

Stevenson's presentation at Milner Library, "Democracy Remembered: Abraham Lincoln, Jesse Fell and the Stevensons," produced nods of agreement, laughter and applause from about 165 people who attended.

It was filled with stories and quotes from notes and papers compiled by his family over the past 150 years.

These papers, later known informally as "the black book," started with stories about Abraham Lincoln told by his great-grandfather Adlai E. Stevenson I, who served as vice president under Grover Cleveland. It continues with observations by Adlai E. Stevenson II, former Illinois governor and two-time Democratic presidential candidate, and concludes with the 78-year-old's political and civic career.

After the presentation, he exchanged stories with the audience and signed copies of the compilation, recently published as "The Black Book," a 300-page hardcover that retails for \$29.95 and is available at www.adlai3.com.

"He makes us proud to be Illinoisan again," said Joan Falcone of Bloomington, who attended the event. Her family has been a long-time supporter of the Stevensons.

Stevenson, who lives in northwest Illinois, is serious about sharing the historic events experienced by his family.

"I opened a closet several months ago and this fell out," he said, revealing an 1892 American flag. The bottom of the flag incorporated a banner from that year's presidential race with the names of candidate Cleveland and his vice presidential running mate, Adlai E. Stevenson I.

He presented it to Koos, who helped edit the book. The flag will be displayed at the downtown Bloomington museum.

Stevenson said the book recalls another America, when politics was "often idealized and sometimes realized.

"It was not pay to play but sacrifice to serve," he said. "Rod Blagojevich wasn't possible in the old politics."

Some things didn't turn out exactly as the Stevensons expected; some reforms had "unexpected results," he said. When reformers tried to make the process more open, it also created room for lobbyists and special interests.

"I miss the Senate I entered," he said of an 11-year career that began in 1970. "I don't miss the Senate I left."

The Democrat also spoke proudly about what he considers his family's finest accomplishment: "Maybe our role in helping to create a Republican president by the name of Abraham Lincoln."

Meet the Stevensons

Vice President Adlai E. Stevenson I (1835 - 1914)

Elected U.S. vice president, under Grover Cleveland in 1892. Democratic candidate for governor in 1912. Previously served as first assistant postmaster general in Cleveland's first administration; and member of U.S. House of Representatives. In 1900, was on the unsuccessful vice presidential candidate of William Jennings Bryan ticket. Son Lewis Stevenson served as Illinois Secretary of State.

Gov. Adlai E. Stevenson II (1900 - 1965)

Son of Lewis Stevenson. Democratic presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956; elected Illinois governor in 1948; appointed U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 1961, served until his death. He served as assistant to U.S. Secretary of Navy in World War II; and helped design the United Nations, following the war.

Adlai Ewing Stevenson III (1930 -)

U.S. Senator from 1970 to 1981. Also served as Illinois state treasurer. Democratic candidate for governor of Illinois in 1982 and 1986. Stevenson's life has long focused on public policy and business-related activities in East Asia. He is an attorney, and a U.S. veteran, having served in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. He's chairman of a SC & M Investment Management Co. He's also chairman of the Libertyville-based Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy.

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