

**Men's Club Trip to
The National Museum
of Health & Medicine
April 2, 2018**

Skeletons of humans and animals, relics from murdered US Presidents, normal and abnormal body parts, plastinated human organs, and much more are on display at the National Museum of Health and Medicine. On Monday, April 2, 20 members of the Men's Club ventured out to Silver Spring (the museum was moved from Walter Reed when the Medical Center was closed) for a docent-led tour of this unique institution. Our excellent guides regaled us with stories of the famous, the not-so-famous, and the infamous.



Among the many interesting relics exhibited at the museum are the bullet that killed Abraham Lincoln, as well as his bone and hair fragments; a bone with bullet hole from James Garfield, who likely would have survived the assassination attempt had not doctors stuck their fingers in the wound to drain it (the prescribed procedure of the day); and the skeleton of the first monkey to orbit the earth, who died on the operating table. We observed the shattered bones of Union General Daniel Sickles, a controversial soldier whose leg was shot at Gettysburg. He sent his amputated leg to the army to be exhibited, then was livid that his foot was discarded.



The military section showed how military medicine has evolved over the past two centuries, and how innovations during wartime were transferred to the civilian world. In the pathology section, we saw body parts that had elephantiasis, a set of conjoined twins, and other unusual specimens. One exhibit contains a row of skeletons of humans ranging from a fetus of 4 months to a five year old child that shows the relative size and development. We could also observe and handle actual human organs (including a heart) that had been preserved through a process called plastination, in which the water and fat is removed and replaced with a polymer.



The museum has some 25 million holdings, only a fraction of which can be exhibited in its relatively small building. But those that are displayed kept the attendees entranced for the hours of our visit.

