



# LINCARNATIONS

Volume 17 No. 1

March 2009

“Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all”

ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



## Taking Care of Business

2009 Conference in Washington, D.C.

April 17-19

### Not Yet Registered?

Well, it's not too late. **Jim Rubin, West Virginia**, and conference co-organizer **Larry Elliott, Kentucky**, say you're welcome to attend the conference even if you show up and register on Friday, April 17! But it sure would be helpful for planning purposes if they knew of your intentions in advance.

For information/registration materials, contact Jim at PO Box 55, Prosperity, WV 25909; 304-252-6085; [jimrubin@suddenlink.net](mailto:jimrubin@suddenlink.net), or Larry at 9300 Wimbley Court, Louisville, KY 40241; 502-394-0694; [ldelliott@fedins.com](mailto:ldelliott@fedins.com).

Larry also reminds ALPerS that the Colony South Hotel's special rate of \$129 (plus tax) was good until March 17. However, he believes the hotel might still honor that rate after the March 17 deadline. Contact the hotel at 301-856-4500; if you have problems, contact Larry.

### Please note our new Web address.

Due to a series of unfortunate events, we have lost the [lincolnpresenters.org](http://www.lincolnpresenters.org) domain. Our Web Site can now be reached at: <http://www.lincoln-presenters.org> OR <http://www.lincolnpresenters.net>

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Association of Lincoln Presenters  
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March 2009

Dear Members,

We have been enjoying very exciting times. The Bicentennial Year of Lincoln's birth has awakened a desire for more awareness of Lincoln's thoughts and strategies, as well as his dedication to the nation he served. I trust that all of you are witnessing this resurgence, and will capitalize on this opportunity to reinforce the Lincoln legacy, which we have committed to do.

We are excited about the upcoming 15<sup>th</sup> annual ALP Conference in Washington, D.C. The Conference Committee, under the leadership of Jim Rubin and Larry Elliott, has submitted a packed agenda, allowing us to visit several key sites. Early arrivals and late departures will give you additional opportunities to visit sites not on the agenda. We are dedicating the conference to the memory of our late founder and president, Dan Bassuk. Dan's wife, Pat Thomas, will be with us for at least part of the weekend. I am sure you want to be there for the opening banquet and business meeting.

Other exciting happenings include the growing number of new ALP members. Our membership chairman, Jim Sayre, has been working diligently in recruiting both Abe Lincolns and Mary Todds to the ALP's work. This influx of new and younger members is very important to sustaining the work of the ALP. Jim will give his report next month at the conference.

Since our last conference in Alton, Ill., some ALP members have suffered serious illnesses. Several have passed to their great rewards. As we recognize that life here is only temporary, the need for good communication lines among our members is increasingly evident. To this end, I encourage you to notify your ALP officers of any change in address, including e-mail addresses. With ever increasing U.S. Postal Delivery Service mailing costs, e-mail has proven to be an effective alternative in keeping the membership informed. However, it only works if we have your **current e-mail address**.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your ALP President. I look forward to seeing all who can attend at the conference in Washington. Safe travels! And God Speed to all.

Your humble servant,

Stan Wernz

## Convention News

### Honoring the Memories

Please help create a display at the Washington ALP Conference by sending photos (digital or print) and stories about **Dan Bassuk**, to whom this convention is dedicated, and other ALP members who are no longer with us: **Karen L. Lynn, Lambert Ekster, G. William Horsley, Jerry Larsen, H.M. Wammack, Mary Hanks, Lloyd Ostendorf (patron), Herb Johnson, Frank Pettice, Bill Ames, Ralph Borrer, Edwin Francisco, Larry Givens, Macon Ray, Bill Sublett** and, most recently, **Cliff Howard**. Please let **Sharon Wood** know if there is anyone else that is not mentioned and include your memories of them, as well. Digital photos (JPEG please) and written anecdotes may be sent to [nh\\_lincoln@pobox.com](mailto:nh_lincoln@pobox.com) or photo prints and written stories may be mailed to Sharon Wood, 43 Centennial St., Claremont, NH 03743.

### Auction

An auction will once again be part of the conference activities. Anyone having items they wish to donate to the ALP should bring them along for the event, scheduled to take place Friday evening. **Chet Damron, Michigan**, has graciously agreed to be this year's auctioneer. Monies raised through the auction will help defray conference expenses.

Anyone with questions should contact **Edna Rubin** or **Mary Elliott**, auction organizers, for information. (*Contact information for Jim Rubin and Larry Elliott can be found on page 1.*)

### Silent Auction

In addition to the traditional auction, **Pat Thomas** plans to bring items from her husband's (**Dan Bassuk**) Lincoln collection to be offered through a silent auction. The ALP will receive a 15 percent donation from any sales.

Pat writes that there is one large item -- a three-quarter life-size mannequin of Mary Todd Lincoln used by Dan in his shows. "She really looks like and is dressed as Mary," she wrote. Anyone interested should e-mail Pat at [patriciaalice@verizon.net](mailto:patriciaalice@verizon.net). "If there is even one person who would like to buy her, I will arrange a way to get Mary to a new home."

Jim Rubin told "Lincarnations" that conference attendees are encouraged to examine Pat's offerings as soon as they register, so as to allow plenty of time for consideration of the items being offered up for sale.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## "Our Members Share. . ."

This issue's "Our Members Share..." question came from **Joe Woodard, Illinois**, who, during a recent "Abe gig," was asked why Abraham Lincoln was/is such a beloved figure internationally. He was at a loss. Some of you weighed in on this question; others had questions of your own to ask.

### First, your answers to this issue's question:

#### **From George Cheevers, Massachusetts:**

"The foundation of the answer to your question can be found in Lincoln's address to Congress on Dec. 1, 1862 -- the speech which references U.S. democracy as 'the last best hope of earth' (see excerpt below). European democracies had deteriorated into battles between nation states or leadership by ineffective 'councils' or power grabs by oligarchic or monarchic leaders. In short, no democracy. Thus, the U.S. was democracy's last chance. Lincoln's assassination heightened his profile around the world as a bold leader who endeavored to end slavery and preserve democracy. Hence the oft repeated story of Russian peasants, referenced by Tolstoy and repeated in numerous books about Lincoln including D.K. Goodwin's, which present Lincoln as a titan who took on and defeated forces who would have destroyed or severed in-half the U.S. Garibaldi and countless other Europeans were inspired by Lincoln. That's a short answer."

*Excerpt: "Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We -- even we here -- hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free -- honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just -- a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless."*

#### **From Richard Miller, Pennsylvania,**

*(who also writes, "We are the busiest dead guys on the planet."):*

"(Abraham Lincoln's) charismatic personality made a big impression on the diplomats who met him. I believe that Kunhardt's new book describes a French diplomat who commented on how effortlessly he controlled the room. My guess is they reported back to their monarchs who were anxious to meet this most remarkable individual. What an amazing ambassador he would have been."

#### **From Bryce Stenzel, Minnesota:**

"My answer to the gentleman's question of why Lincoln is admired by so many people from other nations is this. We Americans take him for granted. To the foreign observer, Lincoln represents what Americans can be at their noblest, at their best. Despite all the recent "anti-American" rhetoric that has been thrown around (most of it by government leaders not always representative of their citizens' true beliefs), average citizens generally admire Lincoln for the same reasons today as their 19<sup>th</sup>-century counterparts did -- Lincoln appealed to the common man because he was one of them. His struggles to overcome poverty and adversity are still their struggles. Lincoln was, above all else, a humanitarian. His Emancipation Proclamation did much to stop British diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy (a fact lost by many today who criticize it for being too limiting in its scope) because the working people of England would not allow their government to recognize a country that endorsed slavery. May I suggest the following books on the subject: "Diplomat in Carpetslippers," "Lincoln and the Russians" and "Lincoln and the Emperors." I hope this information is helpful."

#### **From Homer S. Sewell III, Georgia:**

"(Abraham Lincoln) is respected and admired for the qualities (for which) most people know him -- his honesty, integrity, fairness to all and love of all people, young and old, black and white alike."

### **Other questions that gave ALP presenters pause:**

#### **Kevin Koester, Wisconsin, writes:**

"February was busier than in the past, though not as busy as I had anticipated, considering the Bicentennial. Is it just I, or tighter budgets, or waning interest in first-person historians?"

"I did receive several questions that I had never gotten before. . . 'When and where did you propose to Mary Todd?' I've done some research in the meantime and have come to the conclusion that this most likely occurred around Christmas of 1840, for the engagement was broken off by Jan. 20, 1841, as reflected in Lincoln's melancholy letter declaring himself the 'most miserable man living.' I'd like to think that the exact occasion was during an outing in the countryside for a weekend with friends, when Abraham and Mary were finally out from under the critical scrutiny of the Edwards.

"'Did Lincoln and Robert E. Lee ever meet?' My subsequent research does not find a occasion when they did.

"I welcome elucidation on these questions."

*Kevin Koester, 210 N. Washington St., Lancaster, WI 53813  
608-723-5629; [IamAbrahamLincoln@yahoo.com](mailto:IamAbrahamLincoln@yahoo.com)*

#### **Murray Cox, Indiana, writes:**

"I've (received this question) twice -- once from an adult and once from a fourth grader. When (at what age) was Lincoln first known as 'Honest Abe?'"

"Also, I have had this question that I didn't have answers for. I won't lose sleep if I don't know, but it was a good one, and could be helpful to know, but I'm not sure where to look. 'How much did a horse cost (particularly during Lincoln's Indiana years [1816-1830])?'"

*Murray Cox, 3979 S. Bailey Road, Wabash, IN 46992  
260-563-7126; [IndianaLincoln@hotmail.com](mailto:IndianaLincoln@hotmail.com)*

#### **From Chris Small, Tennessee:**

"My take is that the Lincoln "mythos" -- what people popularly believe about him -- defines Lincoln as the ultimate embodiment of the American dream and of humanity's best values. Everyone loves the story of an individual who rose by sheer hard work and determination from essentially nothing to a position of great power and responsibility. Add to that amazing story the most devastating war seen in the world's leading Republic and the idea that in the midst of this great crisis and exalted position, which might easily have destroyed or corrupted a lesser man, Lincoln continued, as he had always done, to act by humanity's most admired values: complete honesty, humility, magnanimity and a true desire that all might be free. Top it off with the knowledge that he paid for his perseverance and commitment with his very life -- the story is compelling! Sure it's an oversimplification, but its themes contain what we might hope for ourselves or for our children -- no matter where in the world we live. That's why I think the Lincoln legacy lives on and on."

### **And a final comment:**

#### **From Larry Elliott, Kentucky:**

"A six-year-old boy asked me what my favorite food was. I told him white almond cake. A six-year-old girl spoke up and said it should be ham because your name is Abraham. That was a very clever answer!"

## We Bid Farewell . . .

The past few months have truly proven to be a period of loss for the Association of Lincoln Presenters. We offer our sympathies to the families of our fallen ALP brothers -- **Ralph Borrer, Bill Ames** and **Cliff Howard**.

**Ralph Borrer**, 66, of Holland, Mich., died July 5, 2008, following a battle with cancer. Although employed by his local school district as a bus driver for nearly 24 years, Ralph's passion was his portrayal of Abraham Lincoln. His granddaughter was quoted as saying he began impersonating Lincoln about 20 years ago after growing a beard to annoy his boss. Friends noted his resemblance to the president and started calling him "Abe."

Ralph became well-known for his Civil War re-enactments, lectures and public appearances. His family suggests memorial gifts be made in Ralph's name to the American Lung Association.

**Bill Ames**, 71, died suddenly of an apparent heart attack at his home in Manchester, Mich., on Jan. 18, 2009. A former vocational agricultural teacher and agricultural extension agent, Bill began portraying Abraham Lincoln for his local farming community in the mid 1980s.

Upon his retirement in 1995, Bill began expanding his portrayals and participating in more events, including Civil War re-enactments and historical museum/school presentations. His family suggests memorial gifts be made to the First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor for ministries to the homeless or to the charity of one's choice.

**Cliff Howard**, 78, of Frankfort, Ky., died March 7, 2009, after a long illness. He spent 13 years as a Roman Catholic priest, teacher, counselor and school administrator before retiring from the priesthood and going to work for Kentucky's Cabinet for Human Resources, serving as a life-long counselor to many individuals in need.

For the past 24 years, he and his wife, Joan, studied Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, and Cliff portrayed both men admirably at venues across the country. The family suggests those wishing to make a memorial gift consider the Mother Catherine Marie CP at St. Joseph Passionist Monastery, 8564 Crisp Road, Whitesville, KY 42378, or to the Mary Todd Lincoln House at PO Box 132, Lexington, KY 40588.

### Election Time

Anyone interested in having his/her name placed on the ballot as a candidate for the ALP Board of Directors should contact **Jim Sayre** at 1495 Alton Station Road, Lawrenceburg, KY 40342; 502-839-7191; [lincolna@dcr.net](mailto:lincolna@dcr.net). Positions currently held by **Larry Elliott, Kentucky**; **Stan Wernz, Ohio**; and **Vicki Woodard, Illinois**, will be up for grabs during the annual business meeting. Nomination of others is allowed; however, please make your nominee aware of the nomination in advance and make sure he/she is agreeable to serving if elected.



# Mary's Velvet Rose

It's finally here -- the Lincoln Bicentennial Year that we've been anticipating. And what an exciting year it is! My own President Lincoln has experienced what it must have been like for Abe himself when he visited New England in February/March 1860. We calculate that Abe gave 12 speeches in 12 days. In a letter to Mary, he protested that "had he foreseen the difficulty" of making so many speeches, he might not have come east at all.

In 2009, "Abe" Wood gave 21 speeches in 30 days. One interesting difference is that most of Steve's stops (12 in 21 days) were in Massachusetts, while Abe didn't speak there at all in 1860, figuring that the state was already committed to backing Seward as the Republican Party's presidential candidate.

I participated as Mary Lincoln for some of those programs and have been pleased with the responses from our audiences. We find that most of the questions following our joint programs are about Mary. Comments are often made that it is gratifying to learn more about Mary Lincoln than the commonly held stereotypes. We are pleased to have our work appreciated and to raise awareness of the important role Mary played in Abraham's life.

When we meet in Washington, I would like to invite other Mary Lincoln presenters to share the stories of their experiences while in Mary's persona during this special year. Those of you who will not be able to be with us may send your stories to me and I will share them at our MTL meeting.

I am pleased to be planning to attend a very special event in honor of Mary Lincoln to be held in Springfield, Ill., on July 14, 15 and 16. The highlight will be a memorial service with a wreath-laying ceremony at the Lincoln Tomb to commemorate Mary's death on July 16, 1882. Other activities include a luncheon with guest speaker Catherine Clinton, author of "Mrs. Lincoln: A Life," just released this year; a performance by Donna McCreary and Dean Dorrell, titled "Lincoln Letters"; and a lecture, "Mary's Legacy According to Robert," by Donna McCreary. A dedicated group of ladies, united as *Mary Lincoln's Coterie*, have organized several annual events at Mary's tomb and are pleased to report that attendance has been steadily growing each year. More information, including group discount motel rates, is available at <http://www.marylincolncoterie.com> or by contacting Donna McCreary at [mtlincoln@hotmail.com](mailto:mtlincoln@hotmail.com) or 812-256-2370.

Oh, by the way. . . I'm not going to Springfield alone. My Abe is coming along. Although the events focus on Mary Lincoln, Abrahams are welcome to accompany their ladies, take in the planned activities (all are free and open to the public, except for the luncheon, which costs \$20) or to follow their own pursuits.

Sharon Wood, MTL Committee Chair  
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**Association of Lincoln Presenters**

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**Professional Activities**

**Joe Woodard, Illinois**, chair of the Professional Activities Committee, would love for the membership to send him information regarding their ALP gigs since the Alton conference. All he asks is that you send him a little note -- or give him a call -- with the number of appearances/performances you've presented since April 2008 and perhaps briefly comment on the one that most stands out. Joe can be reached at 602 N. Pine St., Hazel Dell, IL 62428; 217-932-5378; [vwoodard@eiu.edu](mailto:vwoodard@eiu.edu). He'll add up the numbers and let everyone know how busy you've all been during the past 12 months.

**2011 ALP Conference**

**Vernon Risty, Illinois**, reports that the ALP currently has only one location to vote on for the 2011 conference -- the Harrogate/Greenville, Tenn., area as presented by ALPer **Chris Small**. Anyone interested in sponsoring a site should contact Vernon at 103 E. Brittany Drive, Arlington Heights, IL 60004; 847-577-0304 (home); 224-595-8273 (cell); [vristy@hotmail.com](mailto:vristy@hotmail.com).

*Note: Vernon also writes, "FYI: They say that President Obama is the first (president) to use e-mail, but we know that President Lincoln used t-mail (electronic messaging) daily to his generals. (It was) called the telegraph."*