

Mary's Velvet Rose
July, 2011
ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



The Ladies' Luncheon on Saturday, April 16, 2011, at the Captain Morgan Inn in Greeneville, Tenn., was both tasty and tastefully presented. We were pleased to be able to include just about every lady in attendance at the convention, including two young ladies who may very well become Mary Lincoln presenters themselves some day!

We filled the tables with about 30 of us, and thoroughly enjoyed the chance to relax, engage in pleasant conversation, renew old friendships and make new ones. After all, most of us see each other just once a year, so we delight in the time we can spend together!

As a way of directing a post-luncheon discussion to focus on a topic that might help us as we grow in our Mary Lincoln presentations, I proposed a question to consider -- "What would Mary say?" Many of us have been in the situation of being confronted or challenged or questioned about "our" behavior or sanity when we are appearing as Mary Lincoln. How do we respond?

I opened the discussion by saying that, at times, I have simply lost my temper (as Mary often did!) and told the questioner (who, more often than not, was a man) that "no gentleman would ever speak that way to a lady!" On another occasion, when confronted with a derogatory remark about Mary, I took that opportunity to begin a conversation about the difficult circumstances of Mary's life that contributed to her public persona.

Our discussion was lively and many helpful suggestions were made by those who had dealt with this issue before. For instance, we might point out the great sadness in Mary's life -- the loss of three of her sons and her husband; her long suffering from migraines; bouts of melancholia, and the limitations of medical care during her lifetime. We might also emphasize the wisdom of judging Mary Lincoln by the situations she faced in her own time period, not from a 21st-century perspective.

After we had bounced our ideas all around the room, "Maxine" made a comment that tied them all together. She wanted us to realize how profound an impact losing a child has on a woman. Maxine had just lost her own son, only a short time before our convention, and spoke most eloquently on the deep sorrow that she was feeling.

Later that evening, we all attended the wonderful 113th U.S. Army Band concert at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center. After returning to the Inn, two of our ladies told me that

they had the opportunity to put our discussion advice into practice at the theater, while mingling with other members of the audience during intermission and after the show.

Plans are being made for our luncheon and meeting at the 2012 ALP Convention in Decatur, Ill. Kathleen Jensen is a member of the planning committee and spoke to us about some of the early ideas for activities there. We look forward to seeing the convention schedule when it is completed, and hope that many of our MTL friends will join us there next April.

If you have any thoughts on any of the topics discussed here, or ideas to share, please contact me, MTL Committee Chair, at sharon_wood@pobox.com or send a note to me at 43 Centennial Street, Claremont, NH 03743.

*Sharon Wood,
Presenting Mary Todd Lincoln*