

LINCARNATIONS

The Newsletter of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS

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NOW HE BELONGS TO THE STAGES

FALL, 1991



It was "altogether fitting and proper" when three Abraham Lincolns and one Mary Todd Lincoln congregated this summer in New Jersey. The newly organized ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS drew together Bruce and Mary Hanks of Minnesota and Ed Francisco and Dan Bassuk of New Jersey. Three stovepipe hats could be seen from a distance, while nearby the language spoken was distinctly Lincolnese. All were dedicated to the proposition that "now he belongs to the stages."

Book Review:

Sidelights on Lincoln

by Frank McGlynn

Wetzel Publishing Co., Los Angeles, CA., 1947

"For people who like that sort of thing, that is about the sort of thing they would like." (Lincoln)

For presenters of Lincoln, *Sidelights on Lincoln* by Frank McGlynn is a treasure-trove. The author starred in the title role of John Drinkwater's play "Abraham Lincoln" when it premiered on Broadway in 1919 and ran for five years from coast to coast. Frank McGlynn offers invaluable advice concerning Lincoln's voice, dialect, mannerisms, shawl, boots, and stovepipe hat, for those of us who portray Lincoln.

Sidelights on Lincoln is an autobiographical compilation comprising the author's recollections of how destiny seemingly brought him to play Abraham Lincoln, anecdotes and letters from those who saw his performances, and advice on how to perform the role of Lincoln. Speeches and sayings of Lincoln, as well as poems about him, fill out the final section of the book.

McGlynn reports on his meetings and correspondence with such luminaries as Robert Todd Lincoln, President Coolidge, Lincoln authors Carl Sandburg, William Barton, Wayne Whipple, Emanuel Hertz, Osborn Oldroyd, and Lincoln sculptors George Grey Bernard and Gutzon Borglum.

The highlight of *Sidelights* is the charismatic nature of McGlynn's stirring performance as Lincoln, and the impact it made on many people who had known Lincoln personally. Drinkwater's play produced just 55 years after Lincoln's assassination meant that there were people still alive who could compare McGlynn's portrayal to the President they had known.

Despite the fact that Drinkwater's play makes little attempt at historical veracity, and McGlynn's book is unnecessarily lengthy, what shines through is McGlynn's Lincolnian presentation, which can account for much of the success of the play. Time and again we note how McGlynn breathed a living soul into his dramatic portrayal, making



those who knew Lincoln feel that they were actually viewing his reincarnation. Even the arch-conservative, Robert Todd Lincoln, displeased with both Drinkwater's play and an earlier impersonator of his father, was favorably disposed toward McGlynn's portrayal.

For those of us today who present the 16th President, Frank McGlynn's *Sidelights on Lincoln* establishes an ideal model. The author had great reverence for Lincoln, chose not to dress like Lincoln offstage, and even painted a portrait of him. When McGlynn's face was compared to Volk's life-mask of Lincoln, it became evident that he bore a remarkable resemblance to the President.

Frank McGlynn portrayed the role of Abraham Lincoln for 25 years in at least 13 dramatic productions. Unfortunately, this book focuses only on Drinkwater's play. However, contemporary "Lincolns" who wish to see Frank McGlynn playing President Lincoln can rent the videotape of "The Littlest Rebel" (1935), and enjoy watching Frank McGlynn with Shirley Temple on his knee.

(Reviewed by Dan Bassuk)

Announcements and Achievements of Lincoln Presenters

MAX AND DONNA DANIELS - of Wheaton, Illinois perform as Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln. They appeared 45 times in February, and were in 3 parades on July 4th. They expect to be in more than 100 performances in 1991. Max wears the stovepipe hat formerly worn by the late Lincoln Presenter, Glenn Schnizlein.



ROBERT AND JANET TAYLOR - of Tulsa, Oklahoma are a "Taylor-made" couple who have performed as the Lincolns more than 1500 times during the past dozen years. All their Lincoln work is done on behalf of their church. They can be seen most summers at Hildene, Robert Todd Lincoln's home in Vermont.



HOMER S. SEWELL, III - of Jasper, Georgia was Abraham Lincoln at Mount Rushmore's 50th Anniversary celebration on July 4, 1991, along with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Teddy Roosevelt look-alikes. President George Bush headed the festivities. Homer said, "There are no words to describe my feeling upon seeing the image of Abe and the others carved on that big mountain."



GERALD BESTROM - was the winner of the Abraham Lincoln look-alike contest in 1990 in Hodgenville, Kentucky, the site of Lincoln's log cabin. No wonder Gerald travels in a Winnebago painted like a log cabin, and about the same size, too. Congratulations, Gerald, on receiving your diploma on your "181st" birthday.



'Abe' Bestrom

BASIL MOORE - of Marshall, Illinois has successfully published his first book, Basil Moore's Lincoln, which is a sample of the Lincoln stories that the author loves to tell. It is illustrated by Lloyd Ostendorf and published by Mayhaven Press. The book possesses Lincoln's own characteristics of clarity, brevity, logic and humor. Governor Cuomo of New York said of it:

"It's a wonderful little publication, and it serves to remind me—as I suspect it will remind all of its readers—that Abraham Lincoln eloquently addressed the crucial issues of his time with equally memorable eloquence, wit, and verve whether he was addressing thousands of spectators or relating an anecdote to a friend.

His words never fail to touch me—and your book provides wonderfully easy access to some of the best Lincoln stories."



We Talked of Lincoln

by Edward W. Thomson

"We talked of Abraham Lincoln in the night
Until one spoke, 'WE YET MAY SEE HIS FACE.'
Whereon the fire crackled loud through space
Of human silence, while eyes reverent
Toward the auroral miracle were bent
Till from the trancing Glory spirits came
Within our semicircle round the flame,
And drew us closer-ringed, until we could
Feel the kind touch of vital brotherhood
Which Father Abraham Lincoln thought so good."

Lincoln Presenters by State:

There are Lincoln Presenters living in eighteen states of the Union, as follows:
Illinois 15, Florida 4, New Jersey 2,
California 3, Oklahoma 3, New York 2,
Pennsylvania 2, Georgia 2, Kentucky 2,
and one each in Arizona, Michigan,
Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota,
Delaware, Virginia, Maine and Maryland.

Mystery Lincoln Impersonator of Yesteryear



"I wanted to keep my memory and thought of Mr. Lincoln unmarred by any disappointment in seeking a make-up imitation. But I am glad that I came, VERY glad. I feel as though I had spent an evening with Lincoln at the White House. I think I know Lincoln a little more intimately now. _____ certainly gave a remarkable performance - he got me over the footlights." Mark Twain

While in New York City in one of his one-man shows featuring his repertory of Lincoln addresses, _____ was walking down the street in costume and passed a somewhat inebriated actor who glowered and said to his companion: "That fellow won't be satisfied until he's assassinated." The actor was John Barrymore

(Correctly identifying the mystery Lincoln Impersonator will earn you \$5.00.
His identity will be revealed in the next issue of LINCARNATIONS.)

The Association of Lincoln Presenters

On April 15, 1991, the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS was officially inaugurated. It is "altogether fitting and proper" that this association commenced on the anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's glorification.

The aim of this non-profit association is to encourage and support the presenting of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln to the American people by linking Lincolns, furthering communication between Lincoln presenters, celebrating Lincoln presenters of the past, and informing the Lincoln community at large.

Membership in the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS is \$20 annually and \$30 for a family membership. Charter members of 1991 will receive special recognition.

Officers of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS are: Dr. Daniel Bassuk, President; Max and Donna Daniels, Vice-Presidents; Patricia Thomas, Treasurer.

"Now He Belongs to the Stages" is our motto.

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