

# LINCARNATIONS

The Newsletter of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS

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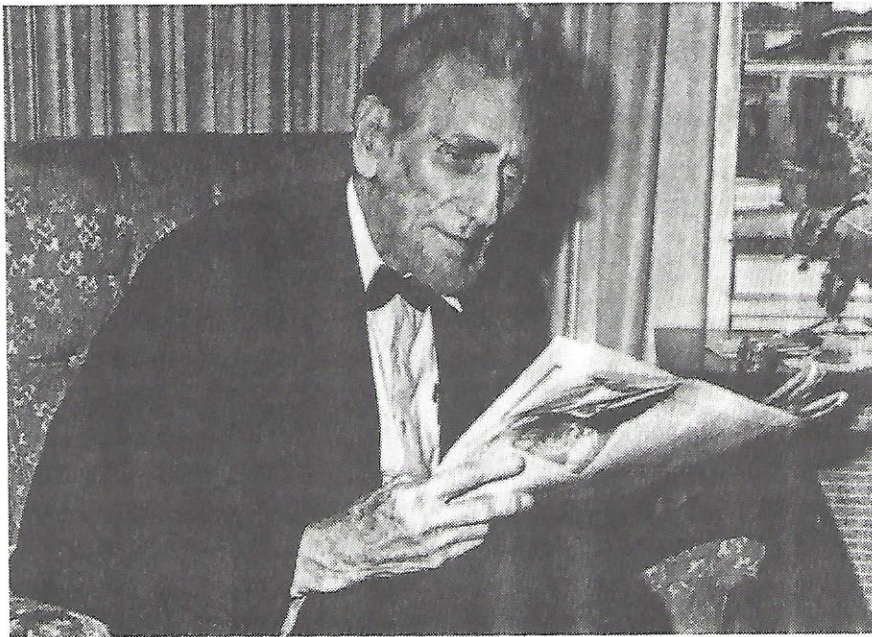
NOW HE BELONGS TO THE STAGES

FALL, 1993

## A Lincoln Portrait of Judge Charles E. Bull (1881-1971)

by Dan Bassuk, Ph.D.

*"Looking like Lincoln is still a thriving business. Of the long list of Hollywood Lincoln-impersonators, those with the closest resemblance, in my judgement, have been George Billings and Charles E. Bull."*  
(from *The Faces of Abraham Lincoln*, by Harry Wood, 1979)



*From the Lincoln National Life Foundation*

Charles E. Bull who reached his 90th birthday on February 26, 1971.

Charles Bull was born in a log cabin in February of 1881. Like Lincoln, he taught himself to read and write, then split rails, studied law, and even became a judge. At age 36 he was "in height, six feet four inches nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and grey eyes," and people remarked about how much he resembled "Honest Abe," so he began imitating Lincoln in vaudeville acts. In 1922, Judge Bull went to San Francisco to watch Frank McGlynn in the title role of John Drinkwater's successful play Abraham Lincoln. Much im-

pressed with McGlynn, but less so with the play, Bull set out to surpass it. Two years later, Bull got the role of Abraham Lincoln in the film The Iron Horse, directed by John Ford. This silent movie was the success that rocketed Bull to the zenith of his career. In 1927 he portrayed Lincoln again in the film The Heart of Maryland, and the next year wrote a short "playlet" called "The Heart of Lincoln" in which he played the President, and Louise Dorgan took the role of Mrs. Lincoln. As the President and First Lady, they performed in schools throughout the land. At the Chicago World's Fair (1933-34), Bull appeared as Lincoln in the Rutledge Tavern. He intended to write a book about Lincoln called From Reveille to Taps but did not bring it to fruition. Much more successful was Bull's rendition of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, recited before large audiences more than a thousand times.

In 1971, the Lincoln scholar, Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, featured Charles Bull in an article in Lincoln Lore (#1599) entitled "If Lincoln Had Grown Old." McMurtry suggested that if Lincoln had lived to 90, he might have looked like Charles Bull at this age. This was "the perfect tribute" to this old trouser. At 90, Bull was still impersonating Lincoln and looking much the part. He lived 6 months and 11 days past his 90th birthday and portrayed Abraham Lincoln for 54 years. And to think that he was born into a Texan family with Confederate sympathies, where the name of "Lincoln" was anathema.



# Max and Donna Daniels -- A Lincoln Team

by Donna Daniels

We met in a community theatre group when we were cast in a play together. Max has always been somewhat Lincolnesque in appearance, 6' 3", black hair, and he had a beard for twenty years. He usually was cast as the judge, the doctor, or the old cowboy, but in 1987 he auditioned for a play that took place during the Civil War, and they needed Abraham Lincoln.

The director's eyes lit up as soon as Max entered the room. Max started what he thought was going to be a six week run. But someone who saw the play said, "I'm putting together a historical pageant, and I'd like you to be in it." Someone who saw him in the pageant asked him to march in a 4th of July parade, and on and on... Eventually, someone suggested that he should bring his wife along as Mary Todd Lincoln, and the rest is history.

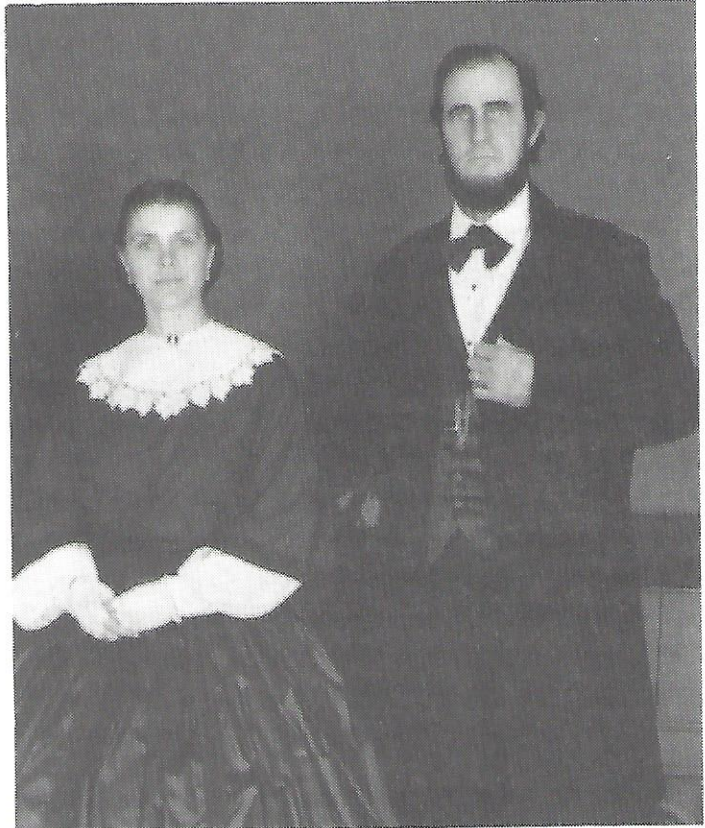
At first it was just acting for us. We borrowed costumes from the theatre and played our parts. But people started asking us questions about the Lincolns, and it was then that we realized how ignorant we were on the subject. We decided it would be a good idea to do some research. Well, the research became interesting, and each answer led to more questions, and finally one day we looked at each other and said, "We have all this wonderful material, wouldn't it make a great script?"

"An Evening with Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln" had its premier in February, 1988. Since then we've developed ten different programs and perform 200 times a year. We're even considering taking early retirement and doing it full time. If anyone had suggested this seven years ago we would have thought it impossible!

There are a lot of things we enjoy about this "hobby," which is rapidly becoming our "business." First and foremost is the opportunity to educate in an entertaining way. The comment we hear most often is, "I learned so much - but I enjoyed it!" The addition of Mary Todd Lincoln to our repertoire increases our opportunities: many people know quite a lot about Mr. Lincoln, but not much about his wife. And the need to keep studying makes it a continuous learning process for us, too.

We are by no means authorities on the Lincolns, but we've learned a lot about them since our "early days." And it would not be a great exaggeration to say that Lincoln has "taken over" our lives. We do very little theatre other than our Lincoln programs, and what used to be our guest bedroom is now a Lincoln library with approximately 600 books, plus dozens of busts, photographs, and prints. Our families know better than to expect us to be at home in February when we give about 60 shows and on weekends during the summer, which is Civil War reenactment season.

Max and I enjoy the opportunity to work together. This has been true of our relationship even before we began portraying the Lincolns, so it just seemed natural that it would be something we'd do together. We had agreed long ago that if this ever stopped being fun, it would be time to quit. But it's still fun, and like Abraham and Mary, we ain't quittin' yet.





## A Trip to Lincoln Land by Dan Bassuk

American Airlines flew me to Chicago, and before nightfall I saw "An Evening with Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln" presented by Max and Donna Daniels. What a wonderful way to start a week of Lincolnizing. Max and Donna recreated the Lincolns better than any couple I've seen, and now I knew that I was in the Land of Lincoln. It wasn't long before I met Lois Schnizlein, part of another Lincoln team, whose late husband, Glenn, is memorialized in the annual Lincoln award of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS. Lois and her family have been major supporters of the ALP, and Max Daniels wears Glenn's old stovepipe hat. Lois joined me for a visit to the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop, where proprietor Dan Weinberg treated our curious eyes to some of his Lincoln treasures. Before Lois departed I had bought a collection of Lincoln Lore, and books by Basler and Sandburg that had belonged to her husband.

The next day I drove to Springfield, but not before stopping at Bloomington to visit Orville Mohr, a fine correspondent on Lincoln presenters. When I arrived in Springfield, I was greeted by Mary Todd Lincoln in the person of Karen Lee Lynn, who graciously arranged my schedule and took me to all the Lincoln sites. Karen arranged an interview with G. William Horsley, who had played Lincoln for 19 seasons at New Salem. Bill Horsley kindly gave me brochures of his play for the years 1964 and 1965. Karen even arranged a meeting with the press for an hour-long interview on the ALP, and there I met Bill Hey, another "Abe". Fortunately, I had time for meetings with "Fritz" Klein and "Mac" McClerren, a new and an old Lincoln friend. The next day Karen introduced me to Jerry Schneider who also portrays "Abe". She showed me the Lincoln home on 8th and Jackson, Lincoln's tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery, and the Old State Capitol. Then I was off to Mt. Pulaski, where upon opening the courthouse door, there stood Abe Lincoln in the guise of Harry Hahn, with a gleaming smile. Harry showed me where Lincoln had actually walked in that historic courthouse. Reporters took note of our meeting.

This September whirlwind tour of Illinois included ten "Lincolns" and has me wondering when I will see the likes of so many lively Lincolns again. It goes to show that Lincoln is alive and well.

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## Announcements and Achievements

1. **NEW MEMBERS OF THE ALP** - Abigail Adams (Kitty McKay), Ward Lamon (Mike Simmons), Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz. Abe Lincolns: Gordon Vincent, Vernon Risty, James Keeran, Chris Christman, Bud Green, G. William Horsley, and William Womack.
2. **ABRAHAM LINCOLN LOOK-ALIKE CONTEST**, Hodgenville, KY (10/9/93), Winner Gerald Bestrom, 2nd place Gordon Vincent, 3rd place Jim Sayre. Gerald Bestrom is planning another Lincoln Look-alike Contest in Branson, Missouri in the near future.
3. **LINCOLN REUNION** On Labor Day, 3 Lincolns, Phillip Chetwynd from Maine, Gordon Vincent and Dan Bassuk joined forces in Neshanic, New Jersey.
4. **VIDEOS** Steven Rogstad of the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin is interested in purchasing videos of performances by Lincoln presenters. Contact Steven at 1923 Grange Ave., Racine, WI 53403.
5. **LINCOLN IN SCOTLAND** - The first statue of Abraham Lincoln outside the USA was rededicated on its centennial, Aug. 20, 1993 in Edinburgh. The Lincoln Group of D.C. organized the event. Lord Longford, author of a Lincoln biography, delivered the rededication speech. Dan Bassuk delivered Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the poem "The Scotland Statue" by David Watson. Bassuk and Paul Kallina of the LGDC have co-authored a book called Lincoln in Scotland that includes this Scottish event. The publisher has not yet been determined.
6. **FORDS THEATRE, NO. LYRIC THEATRE, YES.** - Homer Sewell III has restored the 65 year old Lyric Theatre in Harrison, Arkansas where he presents his Lincoln Show.
7. **Need Lincoln clothing** or a stovepipe hat? Contact Dan Bassuk at (908) 369-7648.



# Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt's Hero

by Ted Zalewski who portrays Teddy Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt's knowledge of Lincoln came early in life. When the Civil War began in 1861, Teedie, T.R.'s boyhood nickname, was two years old. Teedie's father was a staunch Republican and friend of Lincoln. Teedie's mother, Martha Bullock Roosevelt, had grown up on a Georgia plantation. Whereas Roosevelt Senior sometimes accompanied Mary Todd Lincoln on shopping trips and visited Union camps to encourage soldiers to allot part of their pay for their families, Martha worried about her two brothers fighting for the Confederacy, and wrapped packages that she sent to the South.



Teedie sided with his father and the Union cause. Once, Teedie was upset because his mother had disciplined him during the day. When he was saying his prayers with his mother that evening, he tried to wreak vengeance against her by praying with fervor for the success of the Union cause. Later in life, Teddy Roosevelt wrote in his autobiography that his mother remained "unreconstructed" to the day of her death.

On April 25, 1865, Teedie, now six years old, was visiting his grandfather's house near Union Square in New York City. Lincoln's funeral cortege was slowly moving up Broadway. Teedie stood at the second floor window gazing down on the procession carrying Lincoln's coffin.

Because of his need to overcome his many childhood illnesses and weaknesses, Teedie grew into the young, determined Theodore. He was inspired by heroes such as Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and his father. Yet the example of Lincoln loomed large as he grew, and Roosevelt read Lincoln's letters over and over.

Later in life, Roosevelt served as Civil Service Commissioner in Washinton, D.C. He often visited John Hay, who had been Lincoln's personal secretary and encouraged Hay to reminisce about Lincoln. On the evening of March 3, 1904, Theodore Roosevelt was one step shy of the zenith of his political career. The next day he would be taking the Presidential oath of office. No longer would he be an "accidental" President completing the term of the assassinated McKinley. On this evening, John Hay gave Roosevelt a ring containing a lock of Lincoln's hair. One can imagine how much the ring meant to him as tears filled his eyes.

On the centennial of Lincoln's birth, February 12, 1909, Teddy Roosevelt participated in the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial at Lincoln's birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. Roosevelt delivered an address proclaiming his unbounded admiration for Abraham Lincoln. He exalted Lincoln, calling him "one of the two greatest Americans" and describing him in glorious terms.

Teddy Roosevelt's feelings for Lincoln were intense, life-long and nearly mystical. Roosevelt made a mountain of his heroes, and at the summit stood Abraham Lincoln. It is not surprising to stare up at Mount Rushmore today and see the two of them face to face.

*(This is the first in a series of articles on Lincoln's influence upon American Presidents, edited by Ted Zalewski.)*

**THE ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS** is a non-profit association dedicated to the proposition of supporting and encouraging the presenting of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln to the American people. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

Initial membership in the ALP is \$20. Annual renewal is \$5.00 and \$7.50 for an Abe-Mary team. Life membership is \$100.

Officers in the ALP are Dr. Daniel Bassuk, President; Max and Donna Daniels, Vice-Presidents; Patricia Thomas, Treasurer. Please address inquiries and correspondence to Daniel Bassuk, 1143 River Road, Neshanic, New Jersey 08853.