



LINCARNATIONS

The Newsletter of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS

Men of Character

Lincoln Impersonators
Uphold Presidential Virtues

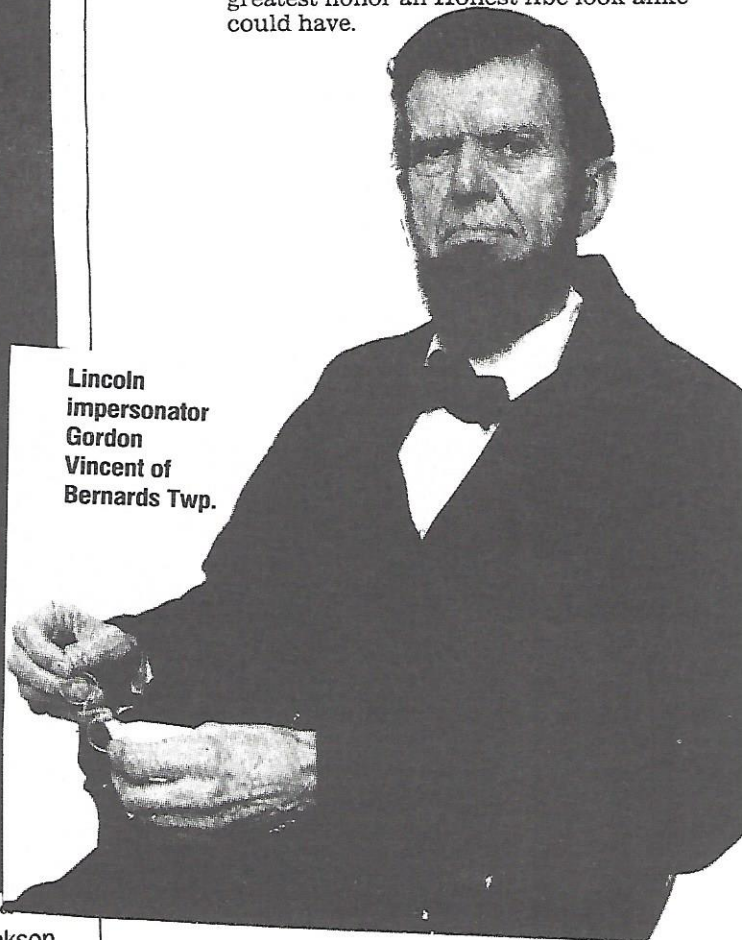


GERALDINE WILKINS-KASINGA / Los Angeles Times

Lincoln impersonator John Kendall shakes hand of second-grader Stacy Blankson.



Last year the Association of Lincoln Presenters, in which Sayre is among some 120 members, named him the top presenter in the country. Next to sleeping in the Lincoln Bedroom in the White House, it's about the greatest honor an Honest Abe look-alike could have.



Lincoln impersonator
Gordon
Vincent of
Bernards Twp.

VERY LINCOLN-ESQUE

The Association of Lincoln Presenters, an organization that presents educational programs about Abraham Lincoln and his wife, Mary Todd, to schools and other organizations, recently selected Middletown's Mary-Eunice as the organization's "Most Noteworthy Mary Todd Lincoln." The award for "Most Noteworthy Abraham Lincoln" went to Charles Brame of California. All awards will be on display at the 3rd annual convention of the organization to be held in Gettysburg, Pa., and will be presented on April 27.



DAVID BERGELAND/Staff Photograph

● Mary-Eunice does a 20-minute monologue about the life of Mary Todd Lincoln, the wife of the 16th U.S. president.



Abraham Lincoln portrayer William Peck was the highlight of Mission San Juan Capistrano's Lincoln Day celebration last month, re-enacting the 1865 signing of documents which deeded the Mission back to the Church.

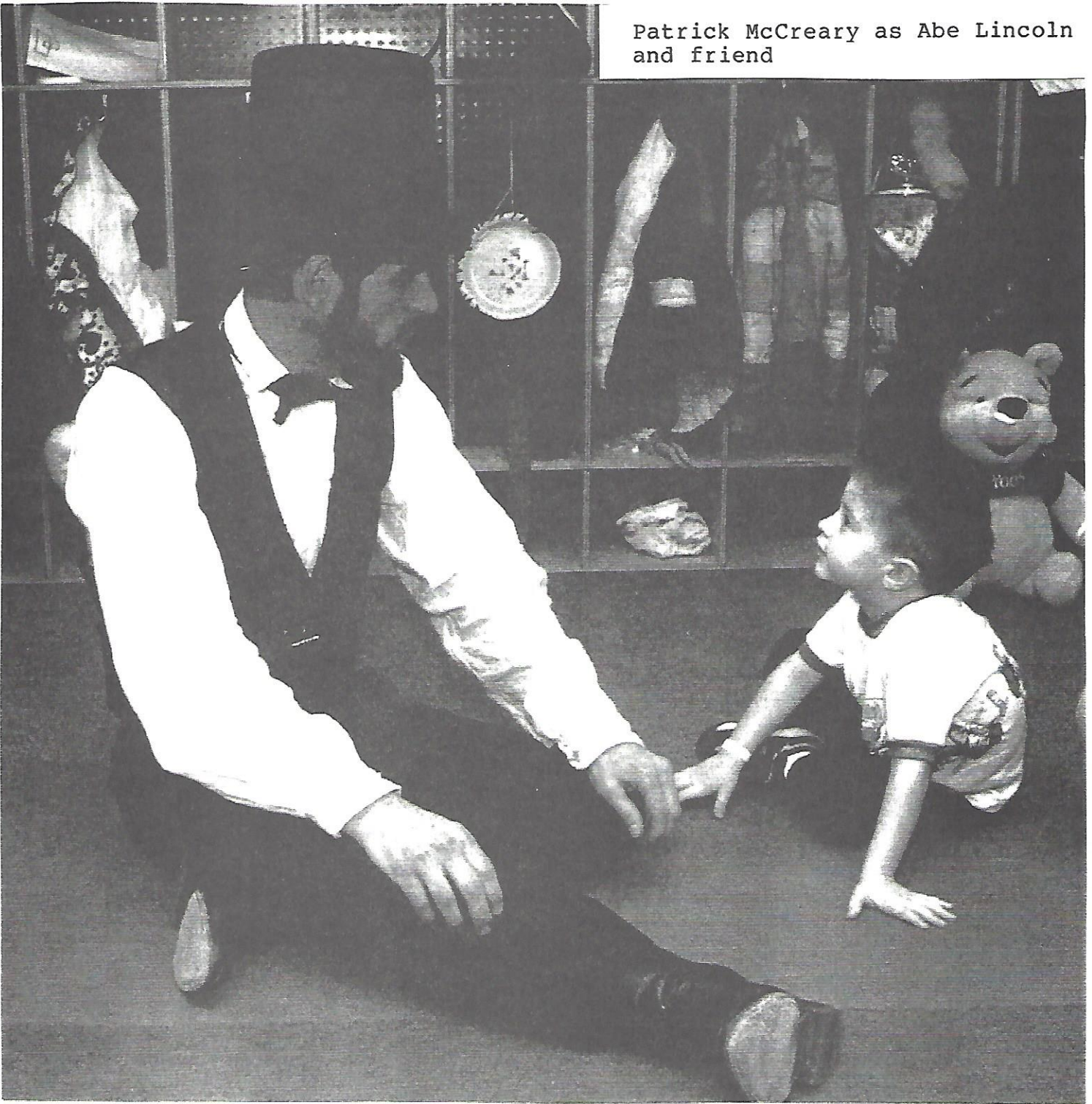


WOMAN'S CLUB PHOTO

Bringing 'Honest Abe' to life

Volusia Medical Center Chaplain the Rev. Chet Damron greets Esther Westbrook left, and Betty Hayes, who organized his recent program at a DeLand Women's Club gathering. Damron, looking very much like President Abraham Lincoln, has treated several local organizations to a presentation on Lincoln recently, including the DeLand Laughter Club.

Patrick McCreary as Abe Lincoln
and friend



"I must confess,
my ghost haunts the White House."
Dan Bassuk, as Lincoln's ghost with
stovepipe hat, tells a GHOST STORY
with Abe Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

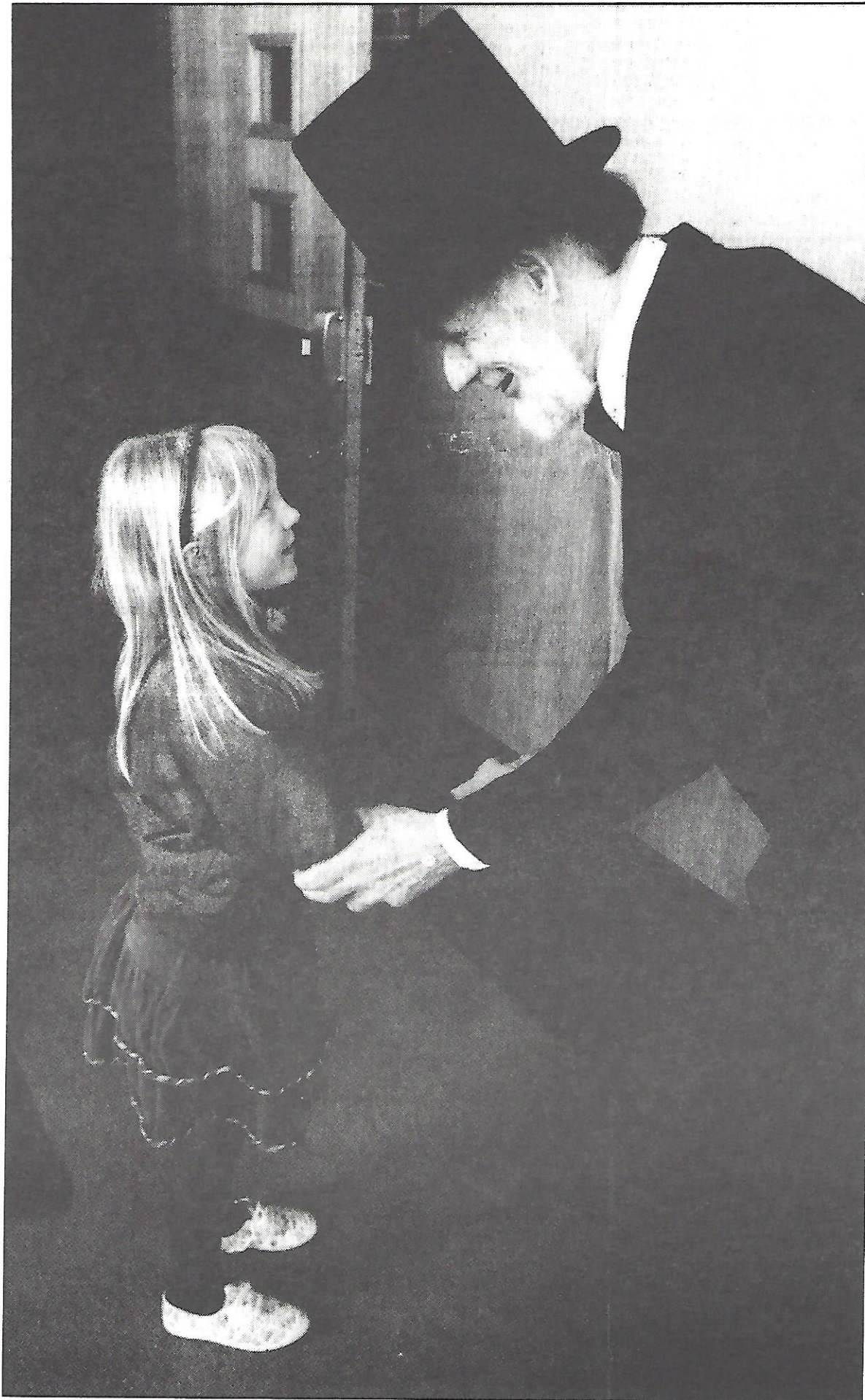
It's Abe (honest)



Left: Pinewoods Elementary fifth-grader Keri Josephs interviews Homer Sewell, who travels around portraying Abe Lincoln for school children. Sewell uses his Abe Lincoln act to teach children about history and persuade them to stay out of trouble and respect others. **Above:** Sewell speaks to an assembly at the school.



Lincolnesque



Staff Photo by **SHERWOOD LANDERS**

■ Matilda Brown, 9, of Sandwich shakes hands with Abraham Lincoln (portrayed by Richard E. Swanson) after a presentation on the Civil War at the Harwich Middle School yesterday.

■ No one is imitated more than the nation's 16th president—except maybe Elvis.

Actors keep Lincoln alive

'Honest Abe' portrayals are back in season

By JIM RITTER
STAFF REPORTER

It takes Chicago actor Michael Krebs 30 minutes to turn himself into Abraham Lincoln.

Krebs draws dark circles around his eyes, reflecting the strain and fatigue of the Civil War. A gel makes his hair stiff and coarse. Even the artificial mole above Krebs' lips looks Lincoln-esque.

For the past year, Krebs has been portraying Lincoln at the Chicago Historical Society's Lincoln exhibit, "Last Best Hope." The exhibit has drawn 200,000 visitors, breaking the museum's previous attendance record for an exhibit by more than 50,000.

Krebs puts on a wing-collar shirt, bow tie and vest and an 80-year-old frock coat. Like Lincoln, he attaches his pocket watch with unpretentious binder twine. And at 6 foot 4 and 180 pounds, Krebs is the same height and weight as America's tallest president.

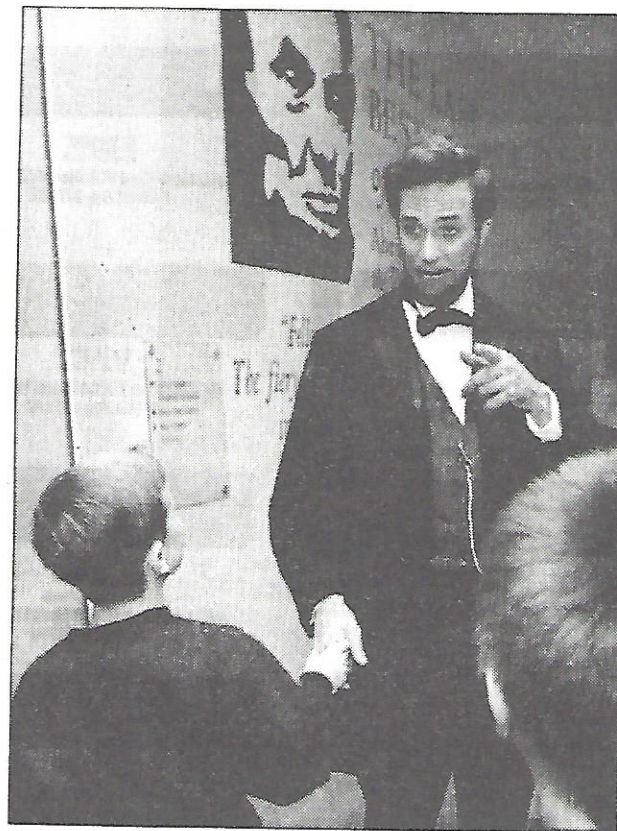
Nationwide, about 90 tall, lanky Americans portray Lincoln, and February is their busiest month. Wednesday is the 188th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and Monday is Presidents Day, honoring Lincoln and George Washington.

Lincoln presenters (don't call them impersonators) are appearing in schools, nursing homes, libraries, museums, service clubs, Civil War re-enactments, even Mercury-Lincoln car dealerships.

With the exception of Elvis Presley, probably no other man in American history has been imitated as much as Lincoln, said Dan Bassuk, president of the Association of Lincoln Presenters in Neshanic, N.J.

"Little kids are always asking me whether I saw Elvis in heaven," Bassuk said.

Illinois, Land of Lincoln, leads the country with 15 Lincoln presenters. But Abe is everywhere, even in the Deep South (five in Georgia, five in Florida, two in Texas and one each in Louisi-



AL PODGORSKI/SUN-TIMES PHOTOS
Dressed as Abraham Lincoln, actor Michael Krebs greets children at the Chicago Historical Society's Lincoln exhibit, "Last Best Hope."

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. Membership in the ALP is \$20. Life membership is \$100.

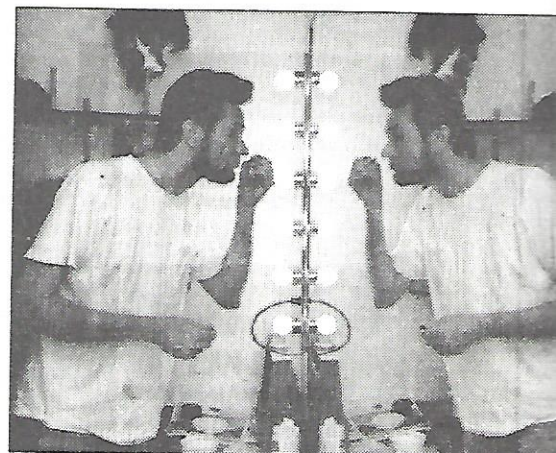
Officers in the ALP are Dr. Daniel Bassuk, President; Max and Donna Daniels, Vice-Presidents; Patricia Thomas, Treasurer; Associate editor, Ted Zalewski; reporter, James Keeran.

call (908) 369-7648 Address inquiries and correspondence to Daniel Bassuk, 1143 River Road, Neshanic, New Jersey 08853.

siana and Virginia). "Southerners are willing to listen and put aside past hatreds," Bassuk said. "It is one country, after all."

Besides Krebs, notable Lincoln presenters in Illinois include:

■ Max Daniels of Wheaton. His wife, Donna, plays Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. They do 250 appearances a year, 58 this month. "I have a real beard and I don't have to use makeup," Dan-



From makeup—including facial mole above his boots, it takes Michael about 30 minutes to make transformation into Abraham Lincoln in his dressing room Chicago Historical Society.

of work," Bassuk said.

Krebs, 40, was daunted at first.

"I didn't know if I had the strength to carve out this incredible mythological character, whether I would be worthy," said. "Slowly, confidence builds."

Krebs took up the part in 1994, when he and another re-enacted the three-hour Lincoln-Douglas debate in Down Galesburg before 1,500 people in period costume. It was broadcast on C-SPAN.

Krebs also teams up with actress DeAnn Heck as Mary Todd Lincoln in an 80-minute play "Visiting the Lincolns." Set last afternoon of Lincoln's life, the dialogue is taken from letters the Lincolns wrote to each other. Their next performance is March 9 at Flatlander's Restaurant in Lincolnshire. For information, call (773) 376-7893.

Krebs delivers Lincoln's words with a slight Kentucky twang. But he doesn't imitate Lincoln's high-pitched squeaky voice. "I don't want to drive audience off the words," he said.

Many people are moved by Krebs' performances. "He's so magnificent," said Arlington Heights history buff Dick Ar. "You feel like you've stepped back in time."

els said. "I'm as ugly as a mud hen."

■ R.J. Lindsey of Chicago. He also plays other historical and biblical figures, including Moses, Noah and Franklin Roosevelt. At 6 feet tall, Lindsey is a bit short for Lincoln, but an 8-inch stovepipe hat "gives the illusion of height."

■ Joseph Woodard, 43, of Downstate Hazel Dell. He plays young Lincoln. His business card says, "Before the presidency. Before the secession. Before the beard."

Most presenters play Lincoln as a sideline. A few, such as Daniels and Krebs, make a living at it.

"You have to be nearly as great as Lincoln himself to get a lot