

LINCARNATIONS

The Newsletter of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS

Number 13

Now He Belongs to the Stages

Summer, 1998

HANKS HANGS-UP HIS HAT

Interview of Bruce Hanks by Dan Bassuk

There may be 3 Lincolns in the Association of Lincoln Presenters who live in towns named Lincoln, but there is only one Lincoln related to Abraham Lincoln, and that is Bruce Hanks. Bruce is a sixth cousin to Lincoln, related through the President's mother, Nancy Hanks, and in tracing the Hanks genealogy, Bruce visited her birthplace in West Virginia. A Baptist minister by profession, Bruce has inspired many preachers to include Lincoln in their ministry. After Bruce grew a beard in 1970, a story about him appeared in a paper and as a result he received more than 50 letters which encouraged him to pursue the Lincoln trail. "It fell into my lap" he said with Lincolnesque humility. "It is Lincoln that is honored, not me."

Presenting Lincoln was Bruce's full-time job from 1972 to 1977, and again from 1987 to 1996. In 1973-4 Bruce played Lincoln at the theater in New Salem. He also made a series of six film-strips called "The Living Lincoln." In those early days, Bruce knew only two other Lincoln presenters, Richard Blake and Charles Ott, and from Ott he bought his stovepipe hat. He also knew Lloyd Ostendorf and Wayne Temple and is pictured with them in the LINCOLN HERALD of Fall, 1973.

One of his most memorable experiences was as Lincoln in Port Angeles, Washington, a city that prides itself on being the provisional capitol of the USA in case the District of Columbia fell to Robert E. Lee. The bicentennial year, 1976, was a bonanza for Bruce. PEOPLE magazine may have had Ronald Reagan on the cover, but inside was a story about Bruce Hanks. Likewise in 1984, a Christian magazine placed Richard Blake on the cover, but the story within was about Bruce.

For 35 years (1961-1996) Bruce has had an illustrious Lincoln career, taking Lincoln to 45 states of the Union. He has written an autobiography (unpublished) called "Hey, I Thought You Were Dead," and performed thousands of Lincoln shows entitled "Lincoln Speaks Today," and "The Biography of a
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HANKS HANGS-UP HIS HAT (Continued from page 1.)

Failure." His two Lincoln programs for school children include slides featuring the life and words of Lincoln, with emphasis on his moral and spiritual strengths. At the close of his talk, Bruce would put his hat on, excuse himself and say, "We have plans for the evening, which my wife has set up, to go to the theater." Fortunately for us, he never made it to Ford's.

The first time I had the pleasure of meeting Bruce Hanks was in 1991. He and his lovely wife, Mary, had driven all the way from Minnesota to New Jersey to participate in a gathering of Lincolns that included Ed Francisco and me. It was a field-day for photo-journalists. The meeting of three "Abes" at my "log cabin" was the first actual gathering of Lincoln look-alikes and the forerunner of future conventions of the A.L.P.

On December 1, 1997, I visited Bruce and Mary Hanks in their retirement home in Texas. At age 73, Bruce is still a dead ringer for Abe, including the wart. He and his wife, Mary, had just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with all their eight children. When they moved from Minnesota to Texas, all their possessions arrived unbroken with the exception of one Lincoln bust that had been with Bruce since high school. Bruce took it as a sign, and on January 1, 1997, shaved off his whiskers and concluded a most-fulfilling Lincoln career.

In the Hanks' home I counted 9 shelves of Lincoln books, 20 framed Lincoln pictures, and 5 Lincoln busts. His library contains two complete sets of "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln", one by Basler and another by Nicolay and Hay. During his lengthy Lincoln career, Bruce wore out 8 stovepipe hats and 4 Lincoln outfits. He kindly shared with me ten large scrapbooks filled with articles recounting his Lincoln years.

Bruce has been an ardent supporter of the ALP since its inception in 1990, and attended the first convention in Kentucky in 1995. He and his wife, Mary, won the ALP award for the best Lincoln team in 1995, and in 1997 were awarded honorary life memberships in ALP. Bruce delivered the sermon at the Shiloh Church near Charleston, Illinois at the fourth convention of the ALP in 1998, and challenged the Lincolns to follow in the footsteps of our revered 16th President. The Lincolns of the ALP extend their admiration and congratulations to Bruce and Mary Hanks for raising the standard of presenting Lincoln for two decades. May you walk in Lincoln's footsteps well into the 21st century and be examples to us all.

Three 'Lincolns' Keep Abe Alive



RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY THE LINCOLNS

1. GENE GRIESSMAN - *The Words Lincoln Lived By* (52 Timeless Principles To Light your Path), Simon & Schuster, 1997.
2. MITCH TULLAI - *Speaking of Abraham Lincoln*, Lion Press, 1998, 269 pgs.
3. CHARLES BRAME - *Honestly Abe*, a Cartoon Exposé of Abraham Lincoln, ABE Press, 1998, 302 pgs.

A review of CHARLES BRAMES, "Honestly Abe", a Cartoon Exposé of Abraham Lincoln, by RICHARD SWANSON (Cape Cod's Lincoln Presenter)

Abraham Lincoln said, "I have always believed that a good laugh was good for both mental and physical digestion." He would have liked HONESTLY ABE. He might have used some of these stories at cabinet meetings (much to the dismay of Edwin Stanton). Lincoln also said, "I have learned from long experience that plain people, take them as they run, are most easily influenced through the medium of broad and humorous illustration than in any other way. So, too, the sharpness of a refusal or the edge of a rebuke may be blunted by an appropriate story, so as to save the wounded feeling and yet serve the purpose."

Charles Brame's HONESTLY ABE, a cartoon exposé, can be read and enjoyed at many levels. One can just enjoy the cartoons and only read the brief captions, or, at another level, study the more detailed descriptions that are included. The more serious reader may consult the references at the bottom of each page.

Using George Washington as a straight man and Charlie B. as a Spin Doctor is clever and works in most cases. HONESTLY ABE will bring many smiles and perhaps a few tears as sad events are presented with a bitter-sweet touch. The art work is well done and the prose sharp. The serious Lincoln scholar will find all the Lincoln stories with which he is familiar and perhaps a few that have escaped him. He may not agree with all of the author's presentations of Lincoln but Charles Brame has used good solid sources (with the exception of Sandburg's *Prairie Years*) to state his case. Admirably he resisted the trend of some recent Lincoln writers who dig deep into dubious sources such as some of Herndon's unreliable informants and making what they will out of Lincoln.

HONESTLY ABE is a wonderful resource for a public speaker or a Lincoln Presenter searching for a gem. Charles Brame is to be congratulated on a job well done. His book is unique and belongs on the shelves of Lincoln literature.

A VISIT WITH LINCOLN by B.F. McClerren, video, MAC Productions, 1991.

Order from 901 Nursery Road, Charleston, IL 61920.

Reviewed by John Kendall (Abe from California)

B.F. McClerren is an excellent look-alike and sounds like the President. This is a presentation for an adult audience as it contains a great deal of material intended to educate rather than amuse. There is good coverage of the debate with Douglas and the full text of some of Mr. Lincoln's better known speeches including the farewell to Springfield and the Gettysburg Address. Mr. McClerren spends a good deal of time examining the slavery arguments and Lincoln's responses to them. Historians and those who want more depth of Lincoln than the most commonly told stories will find this presentation rewarding, insightful, and true to life.

A.L.P. CONVENTION # 5

April 16 - 18, 1999

CALIFORNIA - Burbank and Redlands

Featuring eleven Lincolns from California

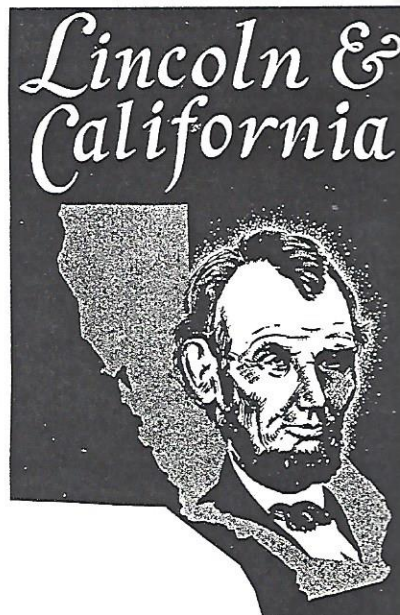
Lincoln at Forest Lawn memorial gardens and St. Gauden's Lincoln statue

Tour of the Lincoln Shrine in Redlands

Workshops with Patrick McCreary

For reservations at the Burbank Hilton call 1-800-468-3576

No car rental needed, transportation provided.



LINCOLN LOG

1. The Association of Lincoln Presenters announces the winners of the Lincoln awards for 1997: Most noteworthy Abraham Lincoln is GERALD BESTROM; most noteworthy Mary Lincoln is DONNA BOWEN; most noteworthy Lincoln team is BILL and STACY WISEMAN who win the Glenn Schnizlein memorial award.

2. Winners of the Lincoln look-alike contests in Hodgenville, Kentucky, October, 1997 are: first place - DENNIS BOGGS, second place - BILL WISEMAN, third place - JIM RUBIN. MARY LINCOLN contest winners are: first place - JANIE HAMILTON, second place - STACY WISEMAN, third place - MARY SAYRE. The next Lincoln Days will occur on Oct. 9-11, 1998. For information call Jim Sayre at (502) 839 - 7191.

3. The winner of the Horsley memorial award for Lincoln in the arts is TED ZALEWSKI for his forthcoming documentary on Lincoln at his Gettysburg Address, filmed at the third convention of the ALP in 1997.

4. The winner of the Karen Lee Lynn memorial award is all 27 Mary Todd Lincoln presenters of the ALP who each received a copy of *The Photographs of Mary Lincoln*, thanks to the generosity of Karen's mother, Katie Hurley.

5. The fourth convention of the ALP was held in Charleston, Illinois on April 17-19, 1998. It was a very successful convention attended by 44 Abrahams and 15 Marys. It included tours of Charleston, a Lincoln-Douglas debate, and the play "Our American Cousin." Our thanks go to the many people who made it a success, especially the McClerrens and the Woodards. NBC's Today show filmed this convention, and it aired on July 2, 1998 and was seen from coast to coast.

6. The following Lincolns have recently retired from work: Jim Sayre (Kentucky) and Bill Peck (California).

7. Please send your e-mail address to Gordon Vincent at gvincent@nac.net

8. Max Daniels is selling many Lincoln and Civil War books. If interested in buying call him at (603) 462-7286 or e-mail: abenbabe@aol.com

9. On July 16th, some Lincolns from California, Bill Peck, Charles Brame, John Kendall, H.M. Wammack, Don Ancell, and George Gulick, appeared on TV with Magic Johnson, arranged by the A.L.P.

THE ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS is a non-profit, educational association incorporated in the State of Delaware. President Dan Bassuk, Vice Presidents Jim Sayre and Patrick McCreary, and Secretary Dr. Gordon Vincent. Correspondence to Dan Bassuk, 1143 River Rd. Neshanic, NJ 08853 or phone (908) 369-7648.