



# LINCARNATIONS

“Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all”

Association of Lincoln Presenters



Dan Bassuk,  
ALP Founder



Stan Wernz,  
President  
Emeritus

## Exploring Illinois History:

### History Book/Travel Guide Combo Aids in Process

In less than a year, ALP members will be congregating in Springfield, Ill., for the organization’s 2023 conference. Presumably, attendees will be seeing several state sites associated with Lincoln. Some travelers, however, may wish to take advantage of their visit to more thoroughly explore what Illinois has to offer as a whole -- historically speaking. And Charles Titus may be able to help those folks make the best of that situation. between a history book and a travel guide, Titus “invites road-trippers and history buffs to explore the Prairie State’s most extraordinary historic sites.”

He “blends storytelling with in-depth research to highlight 20 must-see destinations selected for human drama, historical and cultural relevance, and their far-reaching impact on the state and nation. Maps, illustrations, and mileage tables encourage readers to create personal journeys of exploration to, and beyond, places like Cahokia, the Lincoln sites, Nauvoo, and Chicago’s South Side Community Art Center.”

The book, published by the University of Illinois Press (<https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=p085673>) is also available through Amazon.

Titus is an emeritus professor of history at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston.

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**ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS**  
**11781 Julie Dr.,**  
**Baltimore, Ohio 43105**  
**July 2022**

This is my first opportunity to address our membership since being elected president of ALP at the Leavenworth, Kan., conference in April. I am honored to have been selected, and realize I have big shoes to fill and two legendary presidents to follow. Some of you may not know that ALP has had only two presidents since its establishment more than 30 years ago. Our founder, Dan Bassuk, served for more than a dozen years, followed by Stan Wernz for the next 17 years.

I really enjoy my membership in ALP. I joined in 2009 and attended my first conference in 2010 in Elizabethtown, Ky., and have attended every conference since then. I even co-hosted one in 2013 in Columbus, Ohio. I consider all the members I have met at the conferences to be family, and look forward to the next conference as a family reunion. I shall endeavor to promote the best interests of our organization to the best of my abilities. You may expect frequent communication by email messages throughout the year. Now for a couple of business messages...

The ALP Board has decided to confer upon Stan Wernz the title of "President Emeritus of ALP." For all of his 17 years as president and the time and efforts he has expended on behalf of all our interests, he has certainly earned such a distinction. Furthermore, the board has decided to add his photo to the title page of *Lincarnations* as president emeritus. Some years ago, the board decided that only Abraham and Mary Lincoln, plus our founder, Dan Bassuk, would grace the title page. But your board believes that it is time for a change and that Stan has earned the right to be recognized with our founder. I hope that you will agree with this decision. (By the way, I just discovered that when Stan joined ALP in 1997, he was the 100th Abraham Lincoln to join.)

Next issue is membership. Our organization has dropped by about 30 percent in total membership over the past eight years. Since 2019, we have added no new A. Lincolns and only a couple of members in the "Mary Lincoln" and "Other Presenters" categories. For the first time in recent memory, we have less than 100 Abraham Lincolns. We need to recruit new members. To assist us, we have created a new voluntary position of marketing manager, and Larry Elliott (*Kentucky*) has agreed to fill that position. His primary role will be to talk to prospective members and encourage them to join ALP. But he cannot find new members on his own. That is where we need every member's assistance. We are asking all of you to be on the lookout for persons doing historical interpretations during your own travels. Obtain their contact information and provide it to Larry ([larrylikelincoln@gmail.com](mailto:larrylikelincoln@gmail.com); (502) 394-0694). You can also tell those persons a little about ALP and your own impressions of being a member. Once Larry gets the information, he will endeavor to convince the person to apply for membership. Only by working together can we hope to expand our membership.

Finally, please mark **April 13-16, 2023**, on your calendar for our next conference, hosted by Randy Duncan, in Springfield, Ill. The itinerary is beginning to take shape. Plans call for visits to Abraham Lincoln's home, the Abraham Lincoln Museum and Library, New Salem, the Lincoln Tomb, and the Ninian Edwards' home. Randy also is lining up a good cast of guest speakers for our after-meal programs. More information will be provided periodically throughout the year. But save these dates now for our next conference to visit the adult hometown of our greatest president.

John Cooper, President of ALP

## Members' Feedback Requested Via Conference Survey

Submitted by Vicki Woodard, *Lincarnations* Editor

Every time I look at the accompanying photo on this page, I smile. At first glance, I always picture inmates congregating in the exercise yard of some exclusive institution where there's a fancy-dan prison-issue dress code in effect.

In reality, though, I know it was taken in January 1995 when members met for the first Association of Lincoln Presenters Conference, held in Lexington, Ky. I'm told the photograph was taken at the Mary Todd Lincoln House as some of the 34 Abes in attendance that year grabbed a breath of crisp, cold, winter air.

From ALP Founder Dan Bassuk in an early edition of *Lincarnations*: "The (ALP) was inaugurated in 1990. During the previous decade while studying Lincoln, I came to know several people who impersonated the Lincolns... I decided to 'Link the Lincolns,' and announced the formation of a new Lincoln group with the motto 'Now He Belongs to the Stages.'

"It is our mission to preserve the legacy of Abraham and Mary Lincoln, to honor their words and works, and walk in their footsteps," Bassuk wrote.

By 1995, the ALP had 75 Abes and 22 Marys. Bassuk and other early organization participants quickly learned from that first Kentucky experience that members were eager to learn from one another and form/renew friendships. Thus, annual conferences became a central component of the association's success.

It is important for this tradition to continue. In order to do this and to do it well, we're asking **all members'** cooperation in filling out the accompanying survey. The information we gather will help the ALP board, as well as future conference hosts, in planning what we hope will be meaningful, educational and entertaining experiences.

Or, in the words of Dan Bassuk, experiences "where a renewal of the spirit of Lincoln is sure to occur."

Please help us maintain that spirit by completing the survey and sending it to Vicki Woodard, 602 North Pine St., Hazel Dell, Illinois 62428. It can also be found online at <https://forms.gle/9QhZ8mqKxXEL6oAh8> **The deadline is July 31, 2022.**

We thank you in advance for your participation.



### ALP CONFERENCE SURVEY (July 2022)

*Please use additional sheet(s) as needed for responses. Your feedback is important to us!*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Character(s) Portrayed: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a member of the Association of Lincoln Presenters? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever attended an ALP conference? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

#### CONFERENCE LOCATIONS:

Conferences have been held at the following locations. **Check** those which you have attended.

Please **circle** those locations that you would like the ALP to revisit.

- |                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| _____ 1995 Lexington, Kentucky      | _____ 2009 Washington, D.C.         |
| _____ 1996 Springfield, Illinois    | _____ 2010 Elizabethtown, Kentucky  |
| _____ 1997 Gettysburg, Pennsylvania | _____ 2011 Greeneville, Tennessee   |
| _____ 1998 Charleston, Illinois     | _____ 2012 Decatur, Illinois        |
| _____ 1999 Burbank, California      | _____ 2013 Columbus, Ohio           |
| _____ 2000 Hodgenville, Kentucky    | _____ 2014 Natchez, Mississippi     |
| _____ 2001 Beckley, West Virginia   | _____ 2015 Vandalia, Illinois       |
| _____ 2002 Fort Wayne, Indiana      | _____ 2016 Santa Claus, Indiana     |
| _____ 2003 Lincoln City, Indiana    | _____ 2017 Lexington, Kentucky      |
| _____ 2004 Vandalia, Illinois       | _____ 2018 Freeport, Illinois       |
| _____ 2005 Dearborn, Michigan       | _____ 2019 Amicalola Falls, Georgia |
| _____ 2006 Cincinnati, Ohio         | _____ 2020 No Conference (Pandemic) |
| _____ 2007 Mt. Pleasant, Iowa       | _____ 2021 No Conference (Pandemic) |
| _____ 2008 Alton, Illinois          | _____ 2022 Leavenworth, Kansas      |

In what other specific location(s) would you like to see an ALP conference take place?

\_\_\_\_\_

What makes a particular area a desired location for an ALP conference? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TRANSPORTATION:** Must a conference site be in close proximity to an airport/Amtrak and/or bus station in order for you to attend? \_\_\_\_\_

**LODGING:** Please rank, in order of importance: Cost \_\_\_\_\_, Breakfast Included \_\_\_\_\_, Conference Rooms \_\_\_\_\_, Free Parking \_\_\_\_\_, Free Internet \_\_\_\_\_, Fitness Center \_\_\_\_\_, Swimming Pool \_\_\_\_\_ General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAMMING/ACTIVITIES:**

Please indicate which of the following you're interested in as conference activities:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Talks/Lectures/Seminars (Lincoln/Civil War/Related)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Talks/Lectures/Seminars (General History/Points of Interest of Conference Site)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Travel (Lincoln/Civil War/Related)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Travel (General History/Points of Interest of Conference Site)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Presentations/Demonstrations by Fellow ALP Members (Lincolns et al.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Workshops (hands-on activities, such as "mole" application, hair styles, log splitting)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small Group Round-table Discussions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mary Lincoln Activities (e.g., a luncheon, tea, period handcrafts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dances/Balls
- \_\_\_\_\_ Music
- \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Visits to Local Schools, Libraries, Etc. (pre-conference event)
- \_\_\_\_\_ "Bonus" Pre/Post-Conference Activities (e.g., day trips)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday Church Services at a Local Church
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday Church Services on Our Own
- \_\_\_\_\_ Social Time
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unscheduled Time/Rest Time
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRESENTATION TOPICS:**

Which of the following topics hold interest for you?

- \_\_\_\_\_ The "Business" of Historical Interpretation (e.g., marketing, bookkeeping, taxes, etc.)

- Acting Lessons/Presentation Technique
- Building Your Presentation
- Presenting an Historical Figure Using New Technology
- The Lincoln Family (immediate and extended)
- Contemporaries of the Lincoln Family
- Civil War Characters and Battles
- Fashions of the Mid-19th Century (@1825-1875)
- Etiquette of the Mid-19th Century
- Mourning Habits/Rituals of the Mid-19th Century
- Religion of the Mid-19th Century
- Fireside Pastimes of the Mid-19th Century
- Politics of the Mid-19th Century.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**MISCELLANEOUS:** *(Use separate sheets or back of survey pages if you need more space.)*

Normally an ALP conference features a large meal/buffet on both Friday and Saturday nights. Would you prefer one of those nights be “supper-on-your-own” before meeting together again as a group for the evening’s planned activities? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

At some past conferences, the ALP has “piggy-backed,” (had joint events) with a local organization. What do you think of such joint events? \_\_\_\_\_

One of the largest costs associated with a conference is the cost of a tour bus and driver. When practical, are you willing to carpool to conference events? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If you could have your choice of a particular individual(s) featured as the keynote speaker/guest at an ALP conference, who would it be? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in hosting/co-hosting a future ALP conference? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in leading a session/discussion at an ALP conference?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Area(s) of Expertise/Interest: \_\_\_\_\_

Any final thoughts/comments regarding ALP conferences and how they can best benefit you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

We thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to this survey. Please send your responses by July 31, 2022, to Vicki Woodard, 602 North Pine Street, Hazel Dell, Illinois 62428; [vwoodard@eiu.edu](mailto:vwoodard@eiu.edu). Questions? Call (217) 932-5378.

This survey may also be completed online at <https://forms.gle/9QhZ8mqKxXEL6oAh8>

## Meet Your Fellow Lincoln

### JoAnn Peterson

*Submitted by John Cooper,  
Baltimore, Ohio*

Meet JoAnn Peterson, life member of the ALP since 2014, from Frostburg, Md. She portrays multiple characters, with Mary Lincoln being portrayed most frequently. She's been on the West Virginia Humanities Council as Mary Lincoln. Jenny Lind, Nellie Bly, Shirley Temple Black, the "Unsinkable" Molly Brown, and Abigail Adams.

Previously, she operated a tour operating business that closed in 2020 after 15 years of planning and conducting tours for groups. COVID forced that closure by shutting down all tours in 2020. Earlier, she served as executive director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of North Central West Virginia.



She is a professional actress. Peterson played the lead, Astrid, in the faith-based film, *A Promise to Astrid*, which was named one of the top Christian Films of 2019 by *Country Living Magazine*. One of her co-stars was Dean Cain, who was Superman a number of years ago on TV. Her portrayal of Shirley Temple Black took her to Prague, Czech Republic, where she did a portrayal at the U.S. Embassy's American Center. She owns the ensemble Shirley Temple Black wore when she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Screen Actors Guild, having purchased it at an estate auction. Peterson owns a number of Black's items, and even wears the same blouse she wore.

Peterson graduated from West Virginia University with a bachelor's degree in plant sciences (Dean's List, President's List), and earned her M.B.A. with a concentration in management from Frostburg State University, Frostburg, Md. She enjoys gardening, baking (her chocolate chip cookies are famous

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among her friends), and, surprise, reading! She especially enjoys historical fiction. She is an accomplished vocal musician, having performed in community and professional musical theater. Her biggest professional role was Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music*. Other memorable roles are Marion in *The Music Man* (where she met her husband, who played Harold Hill), Anna in *The King and I*, Miss Hannigan in *Annie*, and Jenny Lind in *Barnum, the Circus Musical*.

Peterson enjoys telling certain stories when portraying Mary Lincoln: "I was getting ready to bathe Tad and Willie. As soon as I put Tad in the tub, Willie ran out the door stark naked. I yelled for Mr. Lincoln, who finally caught up with Willie. Mr. Lincoln swung Willie up over his shoulders. There Willie sat triumphant and naked with legs dangling over his father's shoulders as they walked back into the house. I was mortified."

She also loves this one, which demonstrates Mary's big heart, her compassion, and kindness. Right after Tad was born, a neighbor lady also gave birth to a son. The neighbor was too weak to nurse her child, so Mary volunteered to be the wet nurse for the baby. Mr. Lincoln would fetch the baby at feeding time, and Mary would nurse the baby. It seems that few people know this story about Mary's charitable nature.

Peterson began performing in 2009, and averages about 25-30 performances per year, mostly as Mary Lincoln. But COVID has reduced that to only 10 in the past year, some of those virtual. She has three Mary Lincoln programs: one, an overview of Mary's life, delivered as Mary is preparing to go to Ford's Theater; one, titled *Mary Lincoln: Mother, Sister, Wife*, that examines the Lincoln family; and a third about the duel Lincoln nearly fought for her honor.

Once Peterson was doing a portrayal at the Moundsville, W.V. library. When she broke character to take questions as herself, she spoke directly to two little boys who likely were first- or second-graders, and who were sitting in the front row. They had been so engrossed in the presentation. When she said, "I'm sorry, boys, but I'm not really Mary Lincoln," their faces fell and they both said, "Ohhhh," so disappointedly. They really thought she was Mary.

Her husband, Tom, does not portray Abraham Lincoln but has been researching Ulysses Grant to portray. They've been married for nearly 17 years. Peterson also has three children -- Matthew and Michael Fletcher and Miriah Bell -- and three stepsons -- David, Jamie and John. All told, there are eight

grandchildren.

Peterson's favorite part about playing Mary is to show the humanity; the loving, intelligent, kind, spunky, heart-broken woman who at times was also caustic, short-tempered, and overly emotional. She was a woman who was so misunderstood and misrepresented. People come away with a better understanding of who Mary really was and have more empathy for her. Some people leave with a totally different opinion of Mary than they had previously.

Peterson has met and conversed with Civil War authors Jeff Shaara and Ron White. She had an opportunity to perform at Cooper Union. She has also performed with noted Lincoln presenter, Fritz Klein. Perhaps most coincidental, her family tree converges with Lincoln's. Through some distant ancestors of Abraham Lincoln in England, she shares an ancestor, which would make her Abraham Lincoln's 7th cousin 5 times removed.

Finally, the ring Joann wears while portraying Mary Lincoln is engraved "Love is eternal."



It wouldn't be a conference in Kansas without a little wind!

## Leavenworth, Kansas: Looking Back at 2022 Conference

*Submitted by Host Murray Cox*

As you know, we were finally able to hold the 26th conference of the Association of Lincoln Presenters after two years of postponements. We met in Leavenworth, Kan., to learn of Lincoln's 1859 visit there, and to hear of the events in "Bleeding Kansas" that preceded the U.S. Civil War. We were a small group compared to past conferences, with nine Mary Lincolns, 14 Abrahams, plus four non-members, as well as a photographer from Reuters News Service and one from The Netherlands. But it was a good group, and not so large that one got overlooked in a crowd.

We were based in a hotel in Leavenworth, which was nearby the Riverfront Conference Center, a beautiful 1800s train station that has been maintained and now serves as a community facility. It was there we had our meals while in town, held our business meeting, and heard from several speakers. Thursday night we met there for some socializing, and were joined by a few folks from the community. Mayor Camalla Lionheart welcomed us, and we heard John Altenbernd, who portrayed John Brown, telling us of his early life and some of his deeds in Kansas.

Friday it was off to Fort Leavenworth, escorted by the retired director of public affairs, who cleared us into the fort without having to stop to verify our IDs. One half of our group stayed on the bus to tour the fort, while others went to the Frontier Army Museum on the grounds. Featured there were civilian and military displays of the past, including the buggy that Abraham Lincoln rode in during a part of his Kansas trip. Later, the bus tour also stopped at the museum for a brief stay and a group photo.

It was then on to the conference center to have lunch, and to hear from Joe Bailey, Fort Leavenworth historian, and from George Pettigrew,

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who portrayed an ancestor of his who was one of the Buffalo Soldiers (the four regiments of black men organized after the Civil War for frontier service).

We then carpoled to the University of St. Mary to view a part of its Lincoln Collection, including a signed original of the 13th Amendment. We departed there to view pictures of the era maintained by a local bank, which sits on the site of Stockton's Hall, where Lincoln gave his Leavenworth speech. The men stayed there to hear Kevin Wood give his carefully recreated "Lost Speech" of Lincoln's, while the ladies went back to the hotel for their tea and to hear a local historian speak on women's suffrage.

Friday night we heard our keynote speech from Carol Ayres, who was actually with us once before, in 2002 at our Ft. Wayne conference, and who wrote a book on Lincoln's travel and visit to Kansas in December 1859. Following her talk, we were treated to an outstanding presentation by our beardless Lincoln, Joe Woodard, who gave "Lincoln's First Speech in Leavenworth, Kansas," which he had carefully recreated based on newspaper reports.

Saturday we boarded a bus and went to nearby Lecompton. We watched (and some took part in) an audience participation production, *Bleeding Kansas*. Initially, its format consisted of speeches at a public meeting in Kansas, and dealt with the early hostilities in Kansas as it struggled with violence from both the free-state and slave-state sides trying to form a Constitution for Kansas statehood. It then segued into the testimony of the widow of one of John Brown's victims, then on to John Brown in events after leaving Kansas, and concluded with him on his way to the gallows.

We visited Constitution Hall (the oldest wooden building in Kansas), where the Slave State Lecompton Constitution was drafted, and where

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we were told of the importance that building played in our country's history. We also enjoyed a fried chicken and mashed potato lunch prepared by members of the local Methodist Church.

The folks at Lecompton were extremely happy-- one might even say ecstatic -- that we were there. They received newspaper coverage from nearby Lawrence before we arrived, and received additional coverage on Saturday from Lawrence and Kansas City, which brought them a great deal of attention, not to mention free publicity. It was great that our visit could work so well for them.

Finally, it was a short bus tour through Lawrence to see some points of historical interest, then back to the hotel for some R & R before our annual business meeting. Prior to the meeting, we were entertained at dinner by The Harvey Girls, who told the story of Fred Harvey, who set up feeding sites for early train travelers -- a business that extended into the mid-1900s.

With some distance to travel, several of the attendees had to leave to return home early Sunday, while five of the Abrahams attended services at the Leavenworth Presbyterian Church, where they were warmly welcomed.

That's enough for this year's event. I hope you will be able to be in Springfield in 2023 for our 27th conference.

### **Business Meeting Highlights**

Homer Sewell III (*Georgia*) was recognized for having attended every ALP conference since the first one, held in Lexington, Ky., in 1995.

Susan Miller (*Kentucky*) received the ALP Excellence Award. Miller

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serves as the ALP's Mary Lincoln chair, as editor of *Mary's Velvet Rose*, and was the conference committee coordinator for the 2017 ALP conference held in Lexington.

It was reported that there are currently 148 total members in the ALP, including 92 Abe Lincolns, 37 Mary Lincolns, and 19 other presenters. Two members recently added are Candler Willis of North Carolina, who was an annual member until 2017 and rejoined as a lifetime member as an Abraham Lincoln, and Paolo DeMaria of Ohio, who was admitted as an annual member. He portrays President Rutherford B. Hayes, an Ohio president and Civil War general.

Dayton, Ohio, was chosen as the site of the 2024 ALP conference (April 18-21); Teena Baldrige will serve as hostess.

John Cooper (*Ohio*), Joan Howard (*Kentucky*) and Joe Woodard (*Illinois*) were elected to three-year terms on the ALP Board of Directors. They join Murray Cox (*Indiana*), John W. King (*Ohio*), Susan Miller (*Kentucky*), Stan Wernz (*Ohio*), Kevin Wood (*Michigan*) and Sue Wright (*Tennessee*). Officers, who serve one-year terms, are Cooper, president; Wood, first vice president; Woodard, second vice president; Cox, treasurer; and Wright, secretary.

Deaths reported since previous conference (April 2019): Tom Cecil 1927-2019, Ohio; Lewis "Abe" Clymer 1931-2021, Illinois; B.F. McClerren 1929-2021, Illinois; Lonnie Presnall 1943-2022, Illinois; Bonnie Priebe 1948-2019, Michigan; Fred Priebe 1947-2021, Michigan; Mireya Risty 1944-2022, Illinois; Lois Schnizleinn 1924-2020, Illinois; and Joanna Shelby-Klein 1962-2022, Pennsylvania.

### “Our Members Take the Floor...”

*For the July 2022 issue of Lincarnations, our members were asked, “What are some of your favorite memories from past conferences? And, has your conference participation enhanced your own presentations? In what way(s)?”*



**Murray Cox** (*Indiana*) writes that his first ALP conference was the organization’s third, held in Gettysburg, Pa. “I had just heard of the ALP a week or two before, when my sister living in L.A. sent me an article from the *Los Angeles Times* involving an interview with John Kendall. The ALP was mentioned, (and) I contacted the Times reporter, who gave me Dan Bassuk's number. I soon headed to Gettysburg, and have been involved ever since.”

Cox recalled being warmly received at the conference by both Bill Ames and Dean Dorrell and their wives, as well as others. He also found there was a lot to learn, and that an ALP conference was not someplace to go for a relaxing weekend.

He discovered that a prolonged conversation with almost anyone was going to be hard to hold. “Regarding that, while I wished more (attendees) could have come to our recent conference in Leavenworth (which Cox hosted), it was nice to have a more relaxed weekend, and personal conversations were much easier to have, even for me, with so much I had to do.”

Cox was at a loss to come up with a favorite conference, but if forced to name one, he’d have to choose Jim Rubin’s West Virginia conference in 2001. “The highlight for me was Sunday’s tour through ‘The Bunker’ at The Greenbrier, a Cold War- era secure shelter for the U.S. Congress in the event of an invasion or nuclear attack.”



**Mary Elliott** (*Kentucky*) recalled two ALP conferences that, for her, were especially fun and memorable. Prior to the 2005 Detroit, Mich., event (the Elliotts’ second conference), Mary was told well in advance by Bonnie Priebe, the hostess, that any one attending the evening ball would have to be in period-correct attire. Mary was not portraying Mary Lincoln at the time, but was determined she wanted to attend. So, Mary purchased a period-correct Mary Lincoln outfit. It was at that ball where she had so much fun that she began to think about portraying Mary Lincoln with her husband Larry, who portrays Abraham Lincoln. That was 17 years ago and Mary has portrayed Mary Lincoln about 20 times a year since then (more than 300 times), and has thoroughly enjoyed it.

Mary also distinctly remembers the wonderful scene of 49 Lincolns gathering at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., during the 2009 conference hosted by Jim Rubin. “What I remember about that memorial scene was no official photo as a group was allowed (I still don't know why), and that one Lincoln was locked up and taken to jail because he accepted a \$5 bill for having his photo taken with a visitor. Imagine that scene!”



Fresh from his attendance at the Leavenworth, Kan., conference in April, **Larry Elliott** (*Kentucky*) writes that the 2022 event stands out. “My most memorable conference was (our most recent one). I have been to 13 conferences, and all of them were fun and educational. However, Leavenworth is the most memorable because of just how important (the decision of) Kansas becoming a free or slave state was to Lincoln eventually becoming president.”

At the Kansas conference, Larry learned about the relationship between the Kansas territory, the 1860 presidential election and the Civil War. Among the striking concepts were:

- President Buchanan was pushing for Kansas to become a slave state;
- Fraud in the voting to ratify the Lecompton (slave state) constitution was so blatant as to become undeniable; and
- Controversy over the Lecompton constitution led to a split in the Democratic ranks so that Abraham Lincoln ran against three other men at once -- Stephen Douglas, John Breckenridge, and John Bell. Almost surely, without the Lecompton controversy, Stephen Douglas, and not Abraham Lincoln, would have been elected in 1860.

Elliott noted that “Bleeding Kansas,” the re-enactment examining the free-state versus slave-state violence in Kansas, was entertaining, as well as educational to watch. “I truly felt like I was back in the year 1860. And today, in

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a sense, nothing has changed ... except the characters.”



**Rick Miller** (*Pennsylvania*) recalls that at the Natchez, Miss., conference he was working on a one-man show, *Fink, Lincoln and Twain -- The River was Our Teacher*. Each character had a different hat.

“I happened to be wearing the Mike Fink hat with a red feather in it when I walked into our hotel. Upon seeing me, the woman behind the desk exclaimed, ‘cock of the walk!!’ She then explained that there was a club in town with that name where she had worked as a barmaid. The keelboat skippers wore a red feather to distinguish themselves. The boats had walkways on both sides to permit poling upstream from New Orleans to Pittsburgh.

“I knew I was in the right town to premier my show!!”

Miller further expressed his thanks to Norman Zucker and other organizers for a wonderful conference.

Additionally, Miller recalled an incident in which individual ALP members’ company could be as entertaining as any activity a conference might hold. At a breakfast during the 2006 Cincinnati event, he found himself seated at the end of the table. Charlie Brame sat to his right and Fred Priebe to his left.

“The conversation drifted into politics and I felt very Lincolnesque seated between the right-leaning Fred and the left-leaning Charlie... lots of fun!!” Miller recalled.



**John Walther** (*Illinois*) wrote that he has many great memories from conferences-past, but his favorite took place in Indiana. “As a child, I had unsuccessfully begged and bothered my parents to take me to Lincoln’s Boyhood Home,” he said. The conference in question took place at the boyhood home on the bicentennial of Indiana becoming a state and the Lincolns’ arrival in Indiana.

“At the amphitheater, I lead about 400 fourth-graders in a blab school exercise. ‘Twice one is two. We have much to do...’ Definitely worth the wait.”

Walther also learned and saw a lot of Lincoln-related history and artifacts he hadn’t previously known about or seen, despite having grown up in southern Indiana. An example include minutes of the Little Pigeon Creek Primitive Baptist Church, which Thomas Lincoln and family once attended and where a teen-aged Abraham reportedly served as the sexton. Walther remembered, too, learning about the lawsuit filed against Lincoln by two ferry operators (brothers) who claimed young Abe was infringing on their territory. (They lost the suit, by the way!)

Additionally, he wrote, “At (a) Vandalia conference, I was interviewed by *Al Jazeera America*. I would never have expected that to happen there.”

Also, at the Natchez conference, Walther, along with five other Lincoln presenters and a Frederick Douglass presenter, surprised some people fishing at the Great Wash of the Mississippi. “I don’t think they would have ever expected us to be there, either.”

Surprisingly, Walther met a Walter Q. Gresham presenter at the Natchez conference, as well – a special treat in that Gresham was not only a Civil War general, but that he served as Postmaster General of the United States, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury under President Chester A. Arthur, and as U.S. Secretary of State under President Grover Cleveland. And he was from Walther’s hometown!

“Being on the front page of *The Washington Post* was cool, too,” Walther concluded.



According to **Stan Wernz** (*Ohio*), “every conference I attended provided me with learning opportunities. I have developed friendships and support systems that extend far beyond presenting as Lincoln. These blessings remain with me on a daily basis.

“The most memorable events have been the unselfish responses to hardships fellow members have endured. I recall when Gerald Bestrom’s Lincoln-mobile burned while we were conferencing in Beckley, West Virginia. In short order there was a pot of cash. I don’t remember the exact amount, but the contributions exceeded \$800.

“The second time I remember members responding was when Coleen Vincent fell at our conference in Vandalia (2015). We learned she had been taken to the hospital. Again, very quickly, members gave freely and cheerfully to help the Vincents.”

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**Steve Wood** (*New Hampshire*) reports joining the Association of Lincoln Presenters in 2000, but notes he was not able to attend his first conference until 2001 when it was held in Beckley, W. Va.

“My first experience meeting other association members was at Hodgenville’s (Ky.) Lincoln Days in October of 2000,” Wood wrote. “I met fellow Lincoln Jim Rubin, when I sat next to him at breakfast the morning of the Lincoln look-alike contest. After I mentioned that I planned to participate in the contest, he looked at me and exclaimed, ‘You don’t have a mole!’ He proceeded to take a little container out of his pocket and, then and there, attached a realistic ‘mole,’ fashioned from a pink pencil eraser, to my cheek, with some spirit gum followed by a dab of make-up, to make my Lincoln-look more authentic.

“Afterwards, at the contest, even though I exceeded the three-minute limit during the public speaking event, I guess the newly applied mole must have helped because, with 10 of us Lincolns competing, I placed second.”



**Joe Woodard** (*Illinois*) reported that some of his most striking memories of ALP conferences include performances in character of organization members.

“I have watched and heard some very emotional and moving performances,” he wrote. “I have also seen and heard some mistakes made, which were a caution to me as something I wished to avoid.”

***The editor wishes to thank again all those who submitted an answer to our Lincarnations’ question. Your participation is greatly appreciated.***