



# LINCARNATIONS

Volume 14 No. 1

June 2005

“Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all”

ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



## Remembering Dan Bassuk

The friendship between Dan Bassuk and Jim Sayre ended as it had begun 15 years earlier – with a phone call.

On April 15, during the 11th annual convention of the Association of Lincoln Presenters, efforts were made to allow Bassuk to address the membership via a telephone hook-up. However, technical difficulties prevented the ALP president’s voice -- already weakened by disease -- from being clearly heard by the crowd. Instead, he expressed his disappointment at missing the weekend’s events by speaking one-on-one to Jim Sayre, who then related Bassuk’s sentiments to the crowd.

The short – albeit emotional – conversation ended with Dan’s promise to join his fellow Lincolns a year hence in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Unfortunately, it was a promise he would never be able to keep.

Bassuk died a month later – on May 10 – following a nearly year-long battle with cancer.

“That was my last conversation with Dan,” Sayre recalled. “He was not at the Michigan convention in body, but he was there in spirit.”

Sayre seemed happy to share details of the friendship he once would have thought unlikely.

“My first contact with Dan was in 1990 when I was told about this new association of Lincolns. I contacted him and became a member,” Sayre said. “We corresponded by telephone and regular mail many times. We soon became friends, although we had not met in person.”

One listening in on those early conversations would have heard Bassuk discussing his Lincoln presentations in the New Jersey area. Sayre, in turn, would tell of his adventures as Lincoln presenting programs in and around his hometown of Lawrenceburg, Ky.

But as time passed, and as the friendship grew, conversations began taking on a more personal tone.

“We talked about lots of things, including our families and our backgrounds,” Sayre said. “We had a lot to talk about, despite our differences. He was a retired university professor and I was in the trucking business.”

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## Memorial Service June 11

A memorial service for Dan Bassuk has been scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday, June 11, at the Friends Meeting House, located on the campus of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa. Those planning to attend should contact Rhoda Bassuk at (845) 425-3149 or, via e-mail, at

[rbbass1@optonline.net](mailto:rbbass1@optonline.net).

Anyone wishing to honor the memory of Dan with a gift may make a donation to: Religious Society of Friends, 12 Whittier Place, Swarthmore, Pa. 19081.

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**An Open Letter to the ALP Membership**  
**From Stanley Wernz, First Vice President**

May 16, 2005

Dear Colleagues,

By now, many of you have heard the news of Dan Bassuk's death. At this time, I think we all feel much as Lincoln expressed in his farewell address at Springfield: "No one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting." The most we can do is fulfill Dan's dream as active members of ALP.

It is an honor, a privilege and an extraordinary opportunity for me to now assume the primary leadership role in this organization. Following the man whose vision established the ALP also makes the task an awesome responsibility.

The future of ALP is very much on the minds of all of us. After being elected first vice president in 2003, I discussed with Dan the direction for this organization. We saw the need to continue growing, so that the responsibility for our mission of "keeping the legacy of Lincoln alive" would be spread among a greater number of people.

**With your help**, our organization will continue to grow!

Celebration and education were two other items that were central to our comments. We need to celebrate the successes of our members. Few organizations sustain membership unless there is a procedure to revitalize and invigorate those who labor to promote the group. We all need to hear of these achievements, and share these joys with one another as brothers and sisters.

**With your help**, I plan to promote our family of members!

Lincoln said, "The most important thing we can be about is education." For us, the educational program should be on several fronts. We need to keep up with the latest discoveries about Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln. We need to share what works in presentations and we need to share what doesn't work, as well. As several of our colleagues have told me at our conferences, we have a wealth of resources among our members. Can we find a way to make these assets accessible for all the membership?

**With your help**, I plan to capitalize on our members' knowledge and abilities!

Another dialogue Dan and I had was about incorporating new members into the life of our organization. When people join the ALP, it takes too long before we all get to know them. We need to introduce new members through our newly restored newsletter. We need to develop a mentoring system that will make members know that they are welcomed and valued.

**With your help**, I plan to implement this program.

Accomplishing these tasks will require work, cooperation and investment. Part one of the work has already been started, as is evident by this newsletter. In addition, we are developing an emergency communication chain (suggested by Donna McCreary), so that we can quickly communicate with the entire membership when necessary. You can help us by providing (and keeping current) your e-mail addresses, U.S. postal delivery addresses and phone numbers. These items need to be current and provided for our membership, as well as for Web site updates.

**With your help**, this task will be simple and well done.

Part two -- developing a manual for every member -- is also underway. This manual will include our constitution, by-laws and operational procedures. From time to time, every member will receive updates to be inserted into his or her manual. Examples of operational procedures that all should be able to read include "How We Select Convention Sites" and "How Award Recipients are Chosen." (If you have other items to include in the manual, let members of the Board of Directors know.)

The Association of Lincoln Presenters is a part of Dan Bassuk's legacy. With courage and vision, he brought together a group of geographically scattered persons who were willing to accept as their mission keeping the "legacy of Lincoln alive." And now, ours is the task, yours and mine, to see that this challenge is addressed until Lincoln's message is heard by "the last generation that fate should privilege to inherit the earth." I challenge you to continue sharing this rewarding responsibility with us.

Your humble servant,

Stan Wernz

## What's Happening...

**DO YOU KNOW A LINCOLN WHO HAS BEEN DOING EXCEPTIONAL WORK?** Nominations are now being accepted for the 2005 *“Outstanding Abraham Lincoln”* and *“Outstanding Mary Todd Lincoln”* awards, the *“Glenn Schnizlein Memorial Award”* (for best Abraham and Mary Lincoln team), and the *“Gordon Vincent Memorial Award”* (awarded to any performing team as long as one team member portrays one of the Lincolns). Qualified nominees for each category must: 1) have been an ALP member for more than two years; 2) must be current in dues, or be a life member; 3) must make an effort to present a dignified appearance as a Lincoln; 4) must complete a questionnaire provided by the Awards Committee; and 5) have made accomplishments meriting “outstanding” status.

*(For the “Gordon Vincent Memorial Award,” the Lincoln member of the team must be a member in good standing with the ALP.)*

In addition, nominations are being accepted for the *“Lincoln Legend”* award, to be given to an individual who has portrayed Abraham/Mary for 15 years or more, and been an ALP member for five or more years. In addition to the general criteria above, these nominees must also possess superior knowledge of Abraham/Mary; must have made a lasting contribution to promote or enhance Abraham/Mary’s image through work in publishing, research and or performance; and preferably will have made a contribution to the ALP and the ALP membership.

The *“Railsplitter Award”* is awarded to an individual who has been an ALP member for less than two years, but shows great promise.

*(Note: Only the “Outstanding Abraham Lincoln” and “Outstanding Mary Todd Lincoln” are annual awards. All others are presented on a “as merited” basis.)*

Any ALP member wishing to make a nomination should contact a member of this year’s Awards Committee (see below) who, in turn, can submit up to three names each to the Awards Committee chair. The chair will then notify nominees by U.S. mail that he/she has been nominated, and each nominee will be asked to submit information about his/her performance. The committee chair will supply each committee member with copies of the completed questionnaires, along with a ballot, and winners will be determined by a majority vote of the Awards Committee members. Results will be given to the ALP president, and awards will be announced and presented at the April convention.

Nominations must be submitted by committee members to the Awards Committee chair by Oct. 1.

This year’s committee (composed of award winners from the past two years) includes **Bill Ames** (2003), **Ruthanne Boatright** (2004), **Charles Brame** (2004), **Jim Conine** (2004), **Jim and Mary Hitchcock** (2004; one vote), **Joan Howard** (2003), **Bonnie Priebe** (2004; committee chair) and **Steve and Sharon Woods** (2003; one vote).

**HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2005 DUES?** If not, Treasurer Larry Elliott would love to hear from you. Remember, initial memberships are \$25. Annual renewals are \$10 per individual Lincoln (Abraham or Mary), \$15 per couple and \$20 for patrons. Individual life memberships are \$100.

The association is relying on the honor system this year. Due to unforeseen circumstances, membership records have fallen behind in upkeep and, to be “honest,” it is not real clear who has paid and who has not paid his/her 2005 dues. Beginning in 2006, membership

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Any ALP member wishing to make a nomination should contact a member of this year’s Awards Committee (see below) who, in turn, can submit up to three names each to the Awards Committee chair

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dues will be due by April 30 of each year, and may be sent, via U.S. mail, to the ALP treasurer or presented to that individual during the annual convention.

Currently, checks should be sent to Larry Elliott, 9300 Wimby Court, Louisville, Ky. 40241.

**SPEAKING OF CONVENTIONS**, did you know that the ALP is headed for Cincinnati, Ohio, in 2006? We will meet April 7 through 9 at the Quality Hotel & Suites, 4747 Montgomery Road (513-351-6000/800-292-2079). The discounted room rate is \$77 (and that includes a buffet breakfast). You can call now to book those dates, and be sure when you call to tell them you're with the ALP!

*Note: Arrangements have been made with the hotel to get the same rate for two days before and two days after the convention at the same price.*

For information, contact Stan Wernz ([Lincolnwernzs@peoplepc.com](mailto:Lincolnwernzs@peoplepc.com) or 513-761-6120).

**UP FOR SOME COMPETITION?** Salvisa Ruritan Days (Salvisa, Kentucky) has announced it will sponsor a Lincoln Look-A-Like Contest, scheduled to take place at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 17. For information, contact Jerry at 859-865-4377.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE ALP

**Don Ancell**, California (805-984-6343; [lincolnimpressions@verizon.net](mailto:lincolnimpressions@verizon.net))

**Dan Bassuk** (*President and Founder*) – Deceased; May 10, 2005

**Dean Dorrell** (*Second Vice President*), Indiana (812-254-7315; [abe@honest-abe.com](mailto:abe@honest-abe.com))

**Donna McCreary**, Indiana (812-256-2370; [mtlincoln@hotmail.com](mailto:mtlincoln@hotmail.com))

**Patrick McCreary**, Illinois (618-466-1085; [466@earthlink.net](mailto:466@earthlink.net))

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**Jim Sayre** (*Secretary of Membership*), Kentucky (502-839-7191; [lincolna@dcr.net](mailto:lincolna@dcr.net))

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**Vicki Woodard** (*Secretary*), Illinois (217-932-5378; [csvns@eiu.edu](mailto:csvns@eiu.edu))

**Larry Elliot** (*Treasurer*), Kentucky (502-394-0694; [ldelliott@fedins.com](mailto:ldelliott@fedins.com))

**Ralph Borrer** (*Web site*), Ohio (419-865-2057; [abencamp@abraham-lincoln.net](mailto:abencamp@abraham-lincoln.net))

ALP Web Site: <http://www.lincolnpresenters.org/>

We hope all of you enjoy this issue of "Lincarnations," and that you will find the information it provides useful. It is our intention to begin publishing the newsletter on a quarterly basis, but we can only do that with your help. Please send suggestions, comments, questions, etc., as well as newsletter submissions (articles and/or photographs), to Dean Dorrell and/or Vicki Woodard, co-editors. Items will be used as space permits.

Also, this issue has been sent to the entire membership via the U.S. Postal Service. Those of you willing to help us out financially by agreeing to receive future issues through electronic means (PDF files, with an e-mail notification) should let Dean Dorrell know.

Dean Dorrell – 801 E. Walnut St., Washington, Ind. 47501; 812-254-7315; [abe@honest-abe.com](mailto:abe@honest-abe.com)

Vicki Woodard – 602 N. Pine St., Hazel Dell, Ill. 62428; 217-932-5378; [csvns@eiu.edu](mailto:csvns@eiu.edu)



# Mary's Velvet Rose

## Todd Family Column

Mary Lincoln was a member of the Todd clan – the Kentucky Todds. It was a large and diverse family, and when Elizabeth Edwards referred to ‘the family,’ she meant the Todds. They consisted of well-educated men and women who shaped American history and carved their own places within that history. The Todds were more than aristocrats – they were pioneers, war heroes, statesmen, doctors, educators and members of the clergy. In every aspect of early American history, there was a Todd.

The family came from Scotland to Ireland, and then to the American colonies. Robert Todd (referred to as “the Emigrant”) was the first to come to America. He settled in Pennsylvania and raised a large family. Over the years, his descendants moved into Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, North Dakota and all the way to the western shoreline.

It is the intention of the author to share a few comments about various members of the Todd family in future issues of the ALP newsletter.

## Elizabeth Todd Edwards

Elizabeth was the eldest child of Robert Smith Todd and Eliza Parker Todd. Born November 18, 1813, she never wanted people to know her true age and changed it several times when census takers came to call.

At the Presbyterian Church suppers in Springfield, Ill., Elizabeth was famed for her chicken salad.

It has been written that during Mary Lincoln’s insanity trial, when tempers flared on both sides, only Elizabeth remained “fair-minded and uncalculating” (*The Insanity File* by Mark E. Neely and R. Gerald McMurtry).

Elizabeth and her husband, Ninian Edwards, had four children.

--Submitted by Donna McCreary

## Who or What was Dolly Varden?

Those of you who traveled to Springfield, Ill., to see the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum were treated to a White House depiction of Mary Lincoln inside the White House. Elizabeth Keckly was shown helping Mary Lincoln get dressed for a White House reception. The dress was a lovely evening robe, decorated with embroidered clusters of flowers and small embroidered dots. The dress was completed with a white bertha, white gloves, a corsage of flowers on her bodice and a wreath of flowers on her head. Her jewelry was the pearl set that her husband had purchased for her as a gift at Tiffany’s in New York. Mary Lincoln sat for Matthew Brady in this dress, and four photos are still in existence from that 1861 session. In his book, *The Photographs of Mary Todd Lincoln*, author Lloyd Ostendorf referred to this dress as a ‘Victorian gown of Dolly Varden pattern.’

So, who or what was Dolly Varden?

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a Dolly Varden is a brightly colored fish. This dress is floral, not fishy in design. There must be another explanation.

An internet search revealed that “Dolly Varden” was a fictitious character from the Charles Dickens’ novel, *Barnaby Rudge*. She was known for her flirtatious ways and her brightly colored dresses. One of her favorites was a green dress with pink polka dots.

In the late 1860’s (post Civil War), a green fabric with crimson polka dots was manufactured. This fabric was named Dolly Varden. An investigation through several fashion books led to a description of a Dolly Varden dress. C. Willett Cunnington describes it as a dress of chintz over a bright silk petticoat, plain, flounced or quilted. Later, for winter, the Dolly Varden may have been made of fine flannel or cashmere printed in chintz pattern, with a black silk, satin or velveteen petticoat, often quilted or lined eiderdown. In this fashion, the petticoat is

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seen as a skirt and not an undergarment.

A copy of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century polonaise dress, the Dolly Varden was made of print chintz panniers, buttons and sometimes had a large bow at the waist. It first appeared in the fashion plates in the summer of 1871, and it remained popular until 1875.

By the turn of the century, the term Dolly Varden referred to a woman's large-brimmed hat trimmed with flowers. These were the hats that Gibson girls often wore to garden parties. When the Dolly Varden came into vogue, Mary Lincoln was in mourning attire and not wearing brightly colored skirts. While her 1861 floral-themed evening attire would remind a modern eye of the flirtatious character and the late 1860's fabric of the same name, neither Mary Lincoln nor Elizabeth Keckly would have used the term to describe the gown.

Surely, Charles Dickens had no idea when he created Miss Varden that she would be the inspiration for a fabric, a dress design, a hat and a fish. That is an impressive legacy for a young girl who is a fictional character.

--Submitted by Donna McCreary

### **Lincolns attend Museum Opening in Springfield**

Lonn Pressnall of Illinois attended all four days of the celebration leading up to the dedication of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield.

"I worked the streets with some of my fellow "Brothers of the Brush" and some Mary Todd Lincolns. Saturday I presented an abbreviated program of "A. Lincoln: A Touch of the Poet" in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library atrium.

"Being one of the new kids on the block, then getting my picture taken hundreds of times was a really new experience. In front of the museum the evening of the laser/fireworks show, I had a great chat with George Cheevers, and he graciously stood on the sidewalk and gave me the grassy knoll to even things out. My wife Mary pointed out that two little tykes about seven or eight years of age were holding up Lincoln pennies and comparing profiles with George and my mugs. I thought that was pretty funny."

Joe Woodard of Illinois attended the dedication ceremony on April 19, then toured a portion of the museum.

"When I am asked for my reaction to the Lincoln Presidential Museum, I say it is a wonder and well-worth visiting. If I am asked for more details, I add that there were a number of things in it with which I disagreed. Some are serious objections, some are mere quibbles..."

"The waxwork figures were impressive, but most of the figures of Abraham Lincoln showed him with a nose larger than life, bigger than the nose on the Volk life mask, also on display. The campaign "commercials" for the 1860 presidential candidates were entertaining, but I fear they will mislead the youth, who will go away thinking that television was in place in 1860."

President Bush and other dignitaries at the ceremony...



George Cheevers in front of an exhibit...



## Convention in Dearborn

It snowed a week later, but for Convention 11, held on April 15, 16 and 17 this year in Dearborn, Michigan, the outdoor conditions cooperated fully. "The Lord provided us with perfect weather to cap everything off nicely," said Fred Priebe, convention host. "We hope everyone enjoyed their visit to our city. Bonnie and I certainly enjoyed being the hosts."

According to Priebe's calculations, there were 38 "Abraham Lincolns," 11 "Mary Todd Lincolns" and 22 "others" in attendance for at least, if not all, of the convention activities, which included visits to the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village and the Plymouth Museum. Residents of the Dearborn and surrounding areas went out of their way to make their guests feel welcomed, and attendees went home with gifts galore, including small felt stovepipe hats made by local school children and replicas of Tad Lincoln's "Doll Jack," who received a presidential pardon from the president after "sleeping on picket duty."

Hearts were gladdened at the sight of Larry and Gayle Givens of Ft. Wayne, Ind., who arrived at the convention Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, the couple had to leave early Saturday morning due to some unexpected health concerns. Our prayers and thoughts go out to Larry and his family as he continues to rally from his extended illness.



(Above) Lincolns listening to Mr. Dondaro talk about the Grace Bedell Letter.

(Right) Stan Wernz and the rocking chair in which Abraham Lincoln was shot, now housed in the Henry Ford Museum.



### THIS MAY BE YOUR FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO SEE "YOUNG ABE LINCOLN"

For the past 16 years, the University of Southern Indiana, in partnership with the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, the staff of Lincoln State Park and the members of the Lincoln Boyhood Drama Association, have produced summer theatre seasons featuring the musical, "Young Abe Lincoln." Following the 2005 season, curtains on the production may come down for good.

Budgetary constraints at both the university and the state levels have led to funding decisions that promise to end the historic production at the Lincoln Amphitheatre, located in Lincoln State Park, Lincoln City, Ind.

Those who have never seen the production of "Young Abe Lincoln," a musical celebration of Lincoln's boyhood years in Indiana, will have a limited number of opportunities during the next three months. For a full schedule, please check out the following Web site: <http://www.usi.edu/lincoln>.

The summer production schedule also includes performances of "South Pacific" and a "Live at Lincoln Amphitheatre" music series featuring "a gamut of musical styles from classical to country and rock and roll to big band."

**ALP Note:** For many years, ALP member Macon Ray performed as President Abraham Lincoln in the seasonal productions of "Young Abe Lincoln." Following his retirement, the part went to Dean Dorrell, another member of our organization. And over the years, many ALP members have attended performances in support of their fellow "Lincolns."

An informal gathering has been proposed to commemorate the closing night of "Young Abe Lincoln," scheduled to take place Aug. 3 (a Wednesday). Anyone interested in participating in this gathering as a group is asked to contact Donna McCreary ([812-256-2370](tel:812-256-2370); [mtlincoln@hotmail.com](mailto:mtlincoln@hotmail.com)).



The finale from "Young Abe Lincoln"

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Thirty-four "Abraham Lincolns," accompanied by a handful of "Mary Todds" and others, attended that first convention, held in Lexington, Ky.

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## Remembering Dan, continued...

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By 1992, an idea had formed in Sayre's mind, and he suggested to Bassuk that the time had come for the Lincolns to gather.

"Dan was not receptive to this at first," Sayre said, "but I continued to bring up the idea during our telephone conversations. And I could tell that Dan was beginning to melt some on the issue.

"At long last, in the fall of 1994, he said, 'If you think you can do it, then do it.' And together we pulled that first one off."

Thirty-four "Abraham Lincolns," accompanied by a handful of "Mary Todds" and others, attended that first convention, held in Lexington, Ky.

The success of the event served to further bond the Bassuk/Sayre friendship.

"After that, each of us decided to enter the electronic age with computers. Neither one of us had a great deal of skill, but we did manage to make the e-mails go from our home to his and from his home to mine," Sayre said.

In 1996, Sayre was elected first vice president of the ALP. He served in that capacity until 2002.

"During that time, we made many decisions; some were easy, while others we had to struggle with," he added. "We did not agree on every issue, but we did work through them."

Then came the biggest struggle of all.

"After Dan learned of his illness, we bonded even more. We would talk for long periods of time concerning his health and the future of the association," Sayre said. "The last few times we spoke he would ask for prayer for his condition."

Although Bassuk lost his battle with cancer, Sayre says his friend will live on through the organization.

"As long as this association continues to exist, the name 'Dan Bassuk' will be there."

Sayre recalled meeting Bassuk in person for the first time.

"When Dan walked into the Springs Inn in Lexington in January 1995, I did not recognize him. He was much less in height than I had thought he would be.

"I must confess that after I knew him better, I discovered that he was a giant in disguise."