

Remembering Lincoln: a lifetime hobby

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Weldon Petz, historian and educator, "humanized" Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, before about 65 spellbound listeners last Thursday at the Farmington Community Center.

"We just too often treat our historical figures as nonentities on the pages of history books," said Petz, the principal of Farmington's Woodside Elementary School and a noted authority on Lincoln, speaking before a meeting of the Farmington Men's Club.

"We don't get to know the human elements of them."

After witnessing Petz' hourlong presentation, which included a slide show and several items from his "master collection" of Lincolniana, few of the Men's Clubbers could claim ignorance of Honest Abe's humanity.

"Lincoln remains today probably the second most written-about person in the world," Petz said. "The first is Christ. There's a constant flow of materials."

Unfortunately, some of what has been written — and believed — over the years is a lot of bunk, according to Petz. For example, Lincoln didn't have to overcome poverty and a father described as "an illiterate wandering laborer" by one biographical dictionary.

Truth is, the Lincoln family was quite prestigious with doctors, lawyers, politicians and inventors among its ranks. Thomas Lincoln, Abe's father,



Weldon Petz
knows his Lincoln lore

had a habit shared by few of his fellow frontiersmen — he paid cash for everything.

In fact, the elder Lincoln plunked down 100 pounds sterling to purchase the land near Hodgenville, Ky., on which he built the log cabin in which his son Abe would be born on Feb. 12, 1809.

SO WHY the stories of poverty and parental sloth during Lincoln's early years?

"The early writers on Abraham Lincoln did not have the information we do

today," Petz answered. "That's one thing. Number two, the historians of that day tended to show a man as having overcome adversity. It made a great man seem even greater. And they (the historians) often attacked the father as shiftless and lazy."

Petz' slide show included one of the "marriage bond" between Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. No illiterate, Thomas signed with a flourish. Nancy Hanks, however, made her X.

Abraham Lincoln launched a mighty — and unsuccessful — search for that document during the presidential campaign of 1864 in an attempt to end opponent-generated rumors that he was illegitimate.

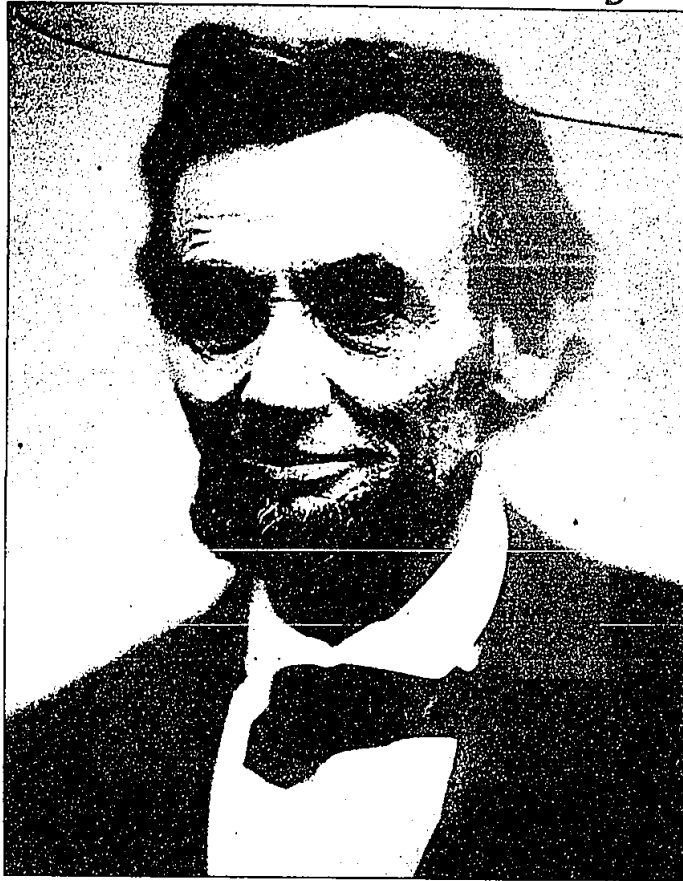
More bunk: The story that Lincoln lived in poverty during his days as a circuit-riding lawyer in Illinois. Actually, his average yearly salary as an attorney was \$5,000, a good frontier income, according to Petz.

Lincoln often has been pictured as a shy, introverted man. Not so, Petz said. "If we look at the playbills and dance programs of the day (in Springfield, Ill.), we'll find that Abraham Lincoln's name is usually on them," he said.

Lincoln, however, did do his sums on the back of a wooden shovel while lying before a blazing fire in a log cabin. That's one true story, Petz said.

LINCOLN VISITED Michigan just once, according to Petz, but saw — and

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photographs by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Petz owns this print of Lincoln taken by Alexander Gardner on April 10, 1865, just four days before the assassination. Only six such prints,

made from the original glass plate, are known to exist.



Reproductions of the famous Volk sculptures of Abraham Lincoln's face and hands were displayed by Weldon Petz at a talk he gave to the Farmington Men's Club at the Farmington Community Center.

INSIDE ANGLES

Know someone doing something notable? Let us know. Write: Inside Angles, Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

TINA BIN, daughter of Edwin and Lucille Bin of Farmington Hills, has entered the United States Air Force's Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP). Tina's entry into the DEP allows the Air Force to schedule an opening for her to attend basic training and be assigned to a job or skill area. She is a 1983 graduate of Harrison High School and will enter the Regular Air Force on May 15. Following graduation from six-week basic training course at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, she will receive technical training in the administration aptitude area and be assigned to an Air Force duty station.

AN ART AUCTION sponsored by the Lawrence Institute of Technology Student Economic Leadership Forum will be held at the Gallery Art Center Friday, March 23. The 8:30 p.m. auction will be preceded by a 7:30 p.m. wine and cheese preview. Tickets are \$5 each and can be purchased the night of the auction at the Gallery located at 18331 W. Twelve Mile in Lathrup Village or in advance by contacting Michael Sweeney, professor of management, at 356-9200, ext. 74. Proceeds from the auction will be used to help establish a library at LIT on the subject of the free enterprise system as well as to educate high school students on the free enterprise system.

HUNTERS SQUARE SHOPPING Center, on Orchard Lake Road at 14 Mile, in Farmington Hills will have a "Grand Anniversary Sale" through Sunday, March 25. The highlight of the sale will be a drawing for a \$1,000 shopping spree. Customers may enter the drawing by just filling out an entry blank at a participating store. The drawing will be held the week of March 26.

THE SMITH THEATRE on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College will present the musical comedy, "A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum," written by Stephen Sondheim at 8 p.m. April 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14 and a matinee on Sunday, April 8, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$5 at the door, advance \$4; students and seniors, \$3. Further information may be obtained by calling 471-7700.

THE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK of Farmington and Farmington Hills is traveling at pretty much the same rapid pace as Farmington Men's Club, started not much more than a year ago in Farmington Community Center. The Men's Club, which meets for lunch and a program, wasn't in business too long before guests were being turned away because of the center's not-more-than-80 capacity. Now the Women's

network, just a few months under way with a breakfast and speaker format in the center, is reporting a paid-up membership of 47.

AREA RESIDENTS will have several opportunities to view the Oakland County Parks photo exhibit during March and April. The exhibit features photos of all nine county parks and winning pictures from park system's photo contests. The exhibit will appear at the Builders & Home Show at Cobo Hall from March 17-25; at Oxford High School Family Day, 10 West Burdick Street in Oxford on Saturday, March 31; at the Lawn Flower and Garden Show at Summit Place, 315 North Telegraph in Pontiac from March 28-April 8; Lathrup Village Community Center, 27400 Southfield Road from April 8-10; and at Crittenton Hospital, 1101 W. University Drive in Rochester from April 23-May 4. Available at the exhibit sites are general park brochures, which give the location of each park and its activities, and pamphlets containing information on individual programs and facilities. For more information, phone 888-0906.

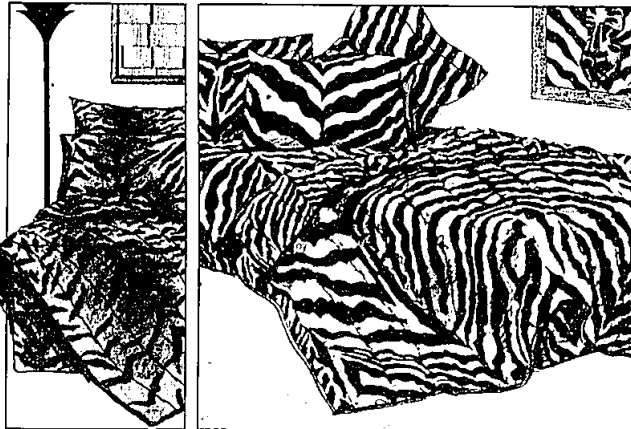
FOR WOMEN who are seeking to obtain credit in their own name there's a new free wallet-sized card available now spelling out the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act. One will be sent on request by writing to Women's Credit Rights Card, American Express Company, Consumer Affairs Office, American Express Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10004.

CONGRATULATIONS to Mark Lebovitz. The 11-year-old from Farmington Hills bowled a 254 game at Bel-Aire Lanes. Mark had strikes in the first eight frames. His 254 game was 75 pins higher than his previous high game. His average is 129.

PLEASE BE REMINDED that from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 24, in North Farmington High School, there will be the citywide open house for Farmington Hills residents who would like to have the thermometer of their home inspected. If you haven't had a chance to attend a previous open house, you are urged to attend this final energy conservation session. For further information, call 474-8115 ext. 277.

REAL SEAL HONOR — American Dairy Association of Michigan (ADAM) President Ernie Girschbach presented McDonald's restaurant operator Stephen DeDecker of Farmington Hills with the "ADAM Award." McDonald's is the first fast service restaurant to receive the award, created by ADAM to honor restaurants serving real dairy products. Each McDonald's restaurant operator received an individualized plaque, featuring the association's golden cream pitcher and bearing the red and white "REAL" Seal — a symbol that distinguishes between quality dairy ingredients and "look-alikes."

PERRY ELLIS PARADES HIS WILD NEW PRINTS



AT EXCITING INTRODUCTORY SAVINGS

Jungle fever, the rage of high fashion, now stalks the home front in Hudson's City Safari event. And Perry Ellis with Martex introduces two of the most striking patterns to make the bedroom scene. **Night Zebra**, a flamboyant black-on-off-white design with rich burgundy border. **Night Tiger**, a rich rusty tone with black markings and green accent. Polyester/cotton percale sheets, reg. \$21 to \$39, sale 16.99 to 30.99. Comforters, reg. \$120 to \$240, sale 99.99 to 199.99. Save, too, on accessories by special order. 3326 units. * Bag your share of savings now in Hudson's Bedding, all stores.

* Total units at all Hudson's stores. Sale ends April 5.

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