By Thomas F. Schwartz

My first encounter with David Herbert Donald came as a graduate student setting up the Lincoln Room at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I became intrigued with the compilation of James Jay Monaghan’s *Lincoln Bibliography*, and my research quickly led me to the James Garfield Randall papers at the University Archives. I was told that David Donald was the literary executor, and that the papers required his permission before use. I wrote a letter to Professor Donald explaining my project and what I planned to use from Randall’s archive. Much to my surprise, I received a very quick and gracious reply granting me permission to examine whatever I required.

Later, I would have an opportunity to read most of David Donald’s studies on Lincoln, Herndon, Sumner, and the Civil War era. All were elegantly written and brimming with insights and ideas. The recipient of two Pulitzer Prizes, one in 1960 for *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* and the other in 1987 for *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe*, Donald was more concerned in writing for an informed general public than a narrow academic audience. He wanted his books to be read by many, not simply admired by a few. In the end, his books were both widely read and also admired by his academic peers.

David Herbert Donald was born in Goodman, Mississippi and grew up witnessing southern segregation firsthand. He attended Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, and interviewed for a job as a high school band teacher, a position he declined after being told that he needed to wear a hat in order to teach at the school. He was accepted into the graduate program at the University of Illinois. I asked Donald in later years if he selected the University of Illinois not because of Randall but because the school was on the Illinois Central rail line that would easily facilitate his travel home to Mississippi.

Randall and his wife Ruth took an immediate liking to Donald. Childless themselves, the Randalls treated David as a surrogate son. Later, David would name his son Bruce Randall Donald in memory of the Randalls. As a research assistant to Randall, Donald greatly benefited from his time at the University of Illinois. His resulting dissertation on William Herndon was published as a book and remains the definitive study of Lincoln’s third law partner. As Donald neared graduation, Paul Angle inquired if Donald had any interest in serving as his replacement as director of the Illinois State Historical Library. Angle had accepted an offer to

(Continued on page 2)
(Continued from page 1)

take over the Chicago Historical Society and was looking for another Lincoln expert to continue running the library. Donald politely declined. When I asked him about it, David indicated that he had no aptitude for running a library or a historical society, which was also part of the director duties at the time. His interest was in teaching and research, two tasks in which he excelled and left an imprint that remains unmatched.

After a series of teaching positions at Columbia University, Smith College, Princeton University, and Johns Hopkins University, Donald joined the faculty at Harvard University in 1973 and remained until his retirement in 1991. Upon retirement, he began work on a new large-scale biographical treatment of Abraham Lincoln. I got to know a number of his graduate students, many of whom have distinguished themselves in the Lincoln field.

One day a letter appeared. It was from David Donald, indicating that he intended to spend several weeks conducting research at the library, and identifying the collections and materials he was interested in using. The courtesy of providing this information in advance is but one example of Donald’s strong sense of social manners and professional conduct. Always a gentleman and a scholar, Donald was charming and gracious even when he disagreed with you.

During his time in Springfield, I had the good fortune to have several dinners with David and took him out to New Salem to see their outdoor theatre presentations. At the time, the Great American People Show offered a trilogy that presented the Lincoln story from his birth up to the bombing of Hiroshima. We saw the first play in the trilogy, “Your Obdt. Servant, A. Lincoln” which was an overview of his life. Donald thoroughly enjoyed the production as well as its lovely setting in Kelso Hollow at Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site.

It was during this time in Springfield that we talked about the Lincoln biography and some of the problems inherent in any biographical endeavor as well as those peculiar to Lincoln. Donald was fortunate to have a son who was computer savvy and who created a database from which to navigate the massive amount of information on Lincoln and his times compiled for the biography. Every day, Donald would be the first to arrive and last to leave the library. When the biography was published in 1995, it became an immediate best seller and remains the preferred starting place for most historians and Lincoln buffs.

In 2005, he was informed that the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation wanted to honor him during the opening events for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum for his lifetime achievement in the field of Lincoln studies. A $25,000 prize was awarded at a sumptuous dinner that was based upon Lincoln era cuisine. After his acceptance remarks, it was announced that the prize would hereafter be known as The David Herbert Donald Prize.

David Herbert Donald remained a loyal member of the Abraham Lincoln Association and an avid reader of the Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association. “The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association,” Donald stated, “is the most important periodical in the field of Lincoln studies. As a Lincoln biographer, I rely on it heavily for both ideas and information.”

In spite of various health problems, Donald remained engaged in public speaking and was always awarded new honors and accolades. He was awaiting heart surgery when he died on May 17 at the age of 88. At the time of his death, Donald was deeply engaged in another biographical study of the post-presidency of John Quincy Adams.

He is survived by Aida DiPace Donald, former editor in chief of Harvard University Press, a son, Bruce Randall Donald of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and two grandchildren.

STEFAN DJORDJEVIC WINS ALA STUDENT AWARD

Stefan Djordjevic, a student at Niles West High School, Skokie, Illinois, was honored as the winner of The Abraham Lincoln Association Student Award during the annual Illinois History Exposition held on May 7 in Springfield. Stefan’s winning paper was titled Rough and Tumble: Chicago’s Wigwam of 1860. His teacher is Janet Kelsey.

Stefan also was awarded a $5,000 scholarship to Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois. The College awards the scholarship each year to the student submitting the best essay on the theme Illinois In The Civil War Era.

The Abraham Lincoln Association Student Award recognizes the best Abraham Lincoln research paper and media project submitted at the Illinois History Exposition. More than 1,400 junior and senior high school students from across the state participated in this year’s Exposition. The students were winners selected during regional history fairs held in early 2009.

The regional fairs and the Illinois History Exposition are coordinated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency’s Education Services Program, which also publishes the online student history magazine Illinois History and Illinois History Teacher. The Agency sponsors the Exposition in cooperation with the Chicago Metro History Education Center.

Stefan Djordjevic was presented with The Abraham Lincoln Association Student Award at the Illinois History Exposition held in Springfield on May 7, 2009. Photograph by David Blanchette.
Michael Burlingame

Photograph by Susan Northrup Scott.

The following remarks of Michael Burlingame were presented on the occasion of the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln celebrated at a banquet at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, Illinois, on the evening of February 12, 2009. Professor Burlingame is a member of the Board of Directors of The Abraham Lincoln Association and holds the Chancellor Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois Springfield.

Upon departing Springfield for Washington to take office as the 16th president of the U.S., Lincoln told his fellow townsman: “To this place, and to the kindness of these people, I owe everything.” As a Lincoln scholar who had spent much time here over the past 25 years, I too feel a strong sense of gratitude to this place and to the kindness of its people. Many of them have extended to me the most gracious hospitality and have assisted me enormously as I conducted my research, first in the bowels of the Old State Capitol and more recently in the splendid new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, whose staff has been unfailingly helpful. If I were to thank all of the Springfielders to whom I feel grateful, I would exhaust my allotted 15 minutes. But I cannot refrain from tendering my special thanks to Dick and Ann Hart and to Sarah Thomas, who over the years have not only generously put me up but have patiently put up with me.

I am deeply honored to be asked to speak on this very special occasion. I would like to share with you some of the new information I have uncovered about Lincoln and to explain why I find him such an inspirational figure.

NEW INFORMATION

Earlier this evening we heard how the foremost African American public figure of the 21st century regards Lincoln. Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to consider what the foremost African American public figure of the 19th century thought of him. In the papers of Frederick Douglass at the Library of Congress, I stumbled across two speeches that Douglass delivered in 1865, neither of which appears in the five-volume edition of Douglass’s public utterances that the Yale University Press published recently.

Before a large audience at Manhattan’s Cooper Union on June 1, 1865, Douglass said: “No people or class of people in the country, have a better reason for lamenting the death of Abraham Lincoln, and for desiring to honor and perpetuate his memory, than have the colored people.” The record of the martyred president, when compared “with the long line of his predecessors, many of whom were merely the facile and servile instruments of the slave power,” was impressive. Lincoln was “in a sense hitherto unknown as an American President” (Continued on page 4)
glimpse of the man, and from the evidence of their senses, they believed in him. They viewed him not in the light of separate individual acts, but in the light of his mission, in his manifest relation to events and in the philosophy of his statesmanship. Viewing him thus they trusted him as men are seldom trusted.”

(Continued from page 3)

thick part of the wedge in 1865 by endorsing the Thirteenth Amendment. Even before March 1862, Lincoln had worked behind the scenes to persuade Delaware to emancipate its slaves. So it was with black suffrage. In 1864, Lincoln had privately urged Louisiana Governor Michael Hahn to enfranchise at least some blacks in Louisiana: “Now you are about to have a Convention which, among other things, will probably define the elective franchise. I barely suggest for your private consideration, whether some of the colored people may not be let in — as, for instance, the very intelligent, and especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks. They would probably help, in some trying time to come, to keep the jewel of liberty within the family of freedom.” In 1865, he publicly endorsed the same policy.

One member of Lincoln’s audience on April 11, 1865, did not underestimate the importance of the president’s call for limited black suffrage. Upon hearing that passage, a handsome, popular, impulsive, twenty-six-year-old actor named John Wilkes Booth turned to a friend and declared: “That means nigger citizenship. Now by God I’ll put him through!” Booth added: “That is the last speech he will ever make.”

Lincoln was murdered because he endorsed the enfranchisement of blacks, not because he issued the emancipation proclamation or supported the 13th amendment. Thus he was as much a martyr to black citizenship rights as Martin Luther King, or Medgar Evers, or Viola Liuzzo, or James Reeb, or Michael Schwerner, or James Cheney, or Andrew Goodman, or any of the other civil rights activists killed during the 1960s.

INSPIRATION

The distinguished biographer of Woodrow Wilson, Arthur S. Link, asserted that he was glad he had spent his academic career studying the life of a man whom he liked and admired. Scholars who specialized in Hitler or Stalin, Link said, seemed to him to be depressed.

Similarly, a rising young pianist recently wrote that he regarded it as a privilege and a responsibility to play Beethoven’s sonatas. When rehearsing and performing those works, he declared, he felt compelled to try to be a better musician and a better human being. I feel the same way about Lincoln. As I conduct research on him and write about him, I feel compelled to try to be a better historian and a better human being. I try, and I will continue to try.

One of the ways I try to be a better human being is to follow the advice that President Lincoln gave a young Union captain who was squabbling with his superior officers. Quoting from “Hamlet,” the president wrote that a father’s admonition to his son—“Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear it that the opposed may beware of thee”—was good counsel “and yet not the best.” Instead, Lincoln enjoined the captain: “Quarrel not at all.”

The reasons Lincoln gave were practical: “No man resolved to make the most of himself, can spare time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper, and the loss of self-control. Yield larger things to which you can show no more than equal right and yield lesser ones, though clearly your own. Better give your path to a dog, than be bitten by him in contesting for the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite.”

Let me close by sharing with you the final paragraph of Abraham Lincoln: A Life: “Lincoln speaks to us not only as a champion of freedom, democracy, and national unity but also as a source of inspiration. Few will achieve his world historical importance, but many can profit from his personal example, encouraged by the knowledge that despite a childhood of emotional malnutrition and grinding poverty, despite a lack of formal education, despite a series of career failures, despite a miserable marriage, despite a tendency to depression, despite a painful midlife crisis, despite the early death of his mother and his siblings as well as of his sweetheart and two of his four children, he became a model of psychological maturity, moral clarity, and unimpeachable integrity. His presence and his leadership inspired his contemporaries; his life story can do the same for generations to come.”

For The People (ISSN 1527-2710) is published four times a year and is a benefit of membership of The Abraham Lincoln Association.
DARWIN, LINCOLN, STANTON AND APES, ANGELS, AND AGES

By Thomas F. Schwartz

With much of the fanfare now behind, the public was reminded that famed British naturalist Charles Darwin and America’s Sixteenth President Abraham Lincoln share a common birthday of February 12, 1809. This year marked the bicentennial celebration for both. David R. Contosta, a professor of history at Chestnut Hill College, provided the first dual biography with Rebel Giants: The Revolutionary Lives of Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin (Prometheus Books, 2008). This was followed by The New Yorker columnist Adam Gopnik’s Angels and Ages: A Short Book about Darwin, Lincoln, and Modern Life (Knopf, 2009).

Victorians were appalled by Darwin’s ideas of evolution: the popular notion that apes evolved into men. Lincoln portrayed apes as an ape or gorilla following the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation. David Strother’s January 14, 1863 image of Lincoln as a monkey holding a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation reinforces the Southern notion that blacks were not human beings. A Phunny Phellow cartoon from May 1864 shows Lincoln as a monkey holding the George B. McClellan cat by the tail. In Lincoln’s other hand is a dead mouse representing the White House, 1865. Clearly a reference to the upcoming presidential contest, the caption reads, “Don’t You Wish You May Get It?” That McClellan frequently referred to Lincoln as “the original gorilla” was based upon a mistaken belief that primates were not intelligent creatures or, anyway, lower than man.

Lincoln’s comparison to apes was not only a nineteenth century phenomenon. Many modern artistic endeavors have the undesired result of creating Lincoln’s visage with simian features. The 2001 Tim Burton remake of the Charlton Heston classic Planet of the Apes substitutes the Lincoln Memorial for the Statue of Liberty at the film’s end. Lincoln is not found sitting in the chair; rather, the evil leader of the apes, General Thade, is shown.

Recent efforts by several scholars have sought to elevate Lincoln from his sometime simian status and give him a harp, wings, and a halo, just like Clarence in Frank Capra’s It’s A Wonderful Life. Beginning with Jay Winik and seconded by James Swanson and Adam Gopnik, these writers claim that Edwin Stanton, Lincoln’s Secretary of War, really said: “Now he belongs to the angels.” From ape to angel, one wonders whatever happened in the intervening ages? A simple answer to this question is that, in efforts to reduce costs, publishers no longer fact check most authors. Every author makes mistakes, but there is no longer the safety net in the editing process to rigorously eliminate them. Had there been such a mechanism in place, Lincoln might never have left the earthbound ages for the heavens above.

Jay Winik, in his best selling book April 1865: The Month That Saved America (HarperCollins, 2001), claims that Stanton later changed his words “Now, he belongs to the angels” to the more widely quoted “Now, he belongs to the ages.” Winik argues “that Stanton did revise his words for history—something that in his time Lincoln did not do—is fascinating in itself. The quote I use is from the attending stenographer, James Tanner (see Bak, Day Lincoln was Shot, 98), which strikes me as most accurate.” Two claims are advanced, both dubious: 1) that Lincoln never revised his publically uttered words and 2) James Tanner claimed that Stanton originally said, “Now, he belongs to the angels.”

Many of the recent books on Lincoln as a writer have convincingly shown that Lincoln was never reluctant to rewrite or polish his prose. This is evident in his Farewell Address to Springfield which exists in three different versions. It is also more starkly evident in the five different versions of the Gettysburg Address.

The real issue is whether James Tanner ever stated that Stanton’s words upon Lincoln’s death were “Now he belongs to the angels.” Richard Bak’s book, The Day Lincoln Was Shot: An Illustrated Chronicle (Taylor, 1998), contains no footnotes so it is impossible to know his sources. Otto Eisenschiml, in Why Was Lincoln Murdered?, also cited by Winik, concedes: “One report, also difficult to authenticate, was that Stanton said, ‘And now he belongs to the Angels.” Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., probably are the likely source of much of the recent confusion. In Twenty Days, the Kunharts provide a description of Lincoln’s death by quoting James Tanner, the stenographer who was present in the room.

(Continued on page 6)
Tanner admits that his pencil point broke trying to remove it from his pocket to record Reverend Gurley’s prayer. But Tanner recalled “…Mr. Stanton raised his head, the tears streaming down his face. A more agonized expression I never saw on a human countenance as he sobbed out the words: ‘He belongs to the angels now.’” The Kunhardts continued to explain “Later, others in the room recalled Stanton’s remarks as loftier—‘Now he belongs to the ages.’” Once again, there is no source cited for Tanner’s remarks or who the “others” were that changed the phrasing. And because the Kunhardts appear to be quoting Tanner directly, others who have used their work assume that they are quoting Tanner correctly. But are they?

In every instance where an author has argued that Stanton used the word “angels” instead of “ages,” no primary source is provided. If Tanner really made this claim, there should be some primary source to cite. What one gets instead is a series of secondary sources that never lead to a primary source. The simple exercise of finding a primary source in which Tanner recalls that fate-ful night consistently results with Tanner use of the word “ages,” and never “angels.” In Lincoln, Illinois, the Lincoln Heritage Museum received a collection of materials from one of its supporters, John Gehlbach. Among the items is a January 11, 1909, letter from David Homer Bates, telegraph operator in the War Department during the Civil War, to James Tanner thanking him for sending his account of Lincoln’s death as published in the Washington Post, April 16, 1905, p.12. Indeed, Tanner received so many requests for his recollection that he composed a standard account that he provided to reporters and other interested parties. Both Tanner’s signed typescript and the Washington Post article have Stanton saying: “He belongs to the ages.” In 1926 Tanner gave a copy of his recollections to Congressman James A. Frear of Wisconsin, who entered it the Congressional Record. This entry was later published as a separate pamphlet.

Tanner was frustrated that, even after providing reporters with printed copies of Lincoln’s last hours, the final published newspaper articles usually mis-quoted him and otherwise distorted the event. In a cover letter to Congressman Frear in 1926, Tanner wrote:

[…]for 50 years I have attended the annual encampments of the Grand Army of the Republic; never missed one since I began in 1876. Well, it was generally known that I had been in that death group and the reporters would come for an interview, and generally, they would mangle what I gave them, plenty of mis-statements, and whatever they got they would cut it to suit their cloth…even after I wrote this article some years ago, I would take a copy or two along to the national encampment, and when they would come at me about this matter, hand them this statement, they would take it, but they would measure what space they had in their paper and invariably cut it, and never once gave it in full, and I never felt more like hitting a man in cold blood…

A lengthy study identifying and comparing all of the textual changes made by newspaper accounts using Tanner’s printed recollection would be a project unto itself. One wonders how Tanner’s repeated claim that Stanton uttered, “He belongs to the ages now,” was transposed to the more popular “Now he belongs to the ages.” Undoubtedly, it has an explanation just as this modest exercise has shown how recent historians garbled Tanner’s words. Modern historians may want Lincoln to soar among the angels, but James Tanner’s broken pencil point may also have clipped Lincoln’s wings in the process, keeping him earthbound for the ages.

**WHO WAS CORPORAL JAMES TANNER?**

James Tanner was born at Richmond-ville, New York, on April 4, 1844. He was a teacher when the Civil War began and he enlisted in September 1861 in the 87th New York Volunteer Infantry. He served as a Corporal with that unit through the Peninsula Campaign, April-July 1862, and at the Battle of Second Bull Run (Manassas), August 29-30, receiving wounds which required the amputation of both legs just below the knees.

Tanner was fitted with two wooden prostheses and learned how to walk with his artificial legs. In 1863, he was appointed Under-Doorkeeper of the New York State Legislature. He studied stenography and in 1864 he obtained a clerkship in the War Department in Washington.

On the evening of April 14, 1865, hearing that President Lincoln had been shot, he hurried to Ford’s Theater and remained there throughout the night with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. He took complete shorthand notes as the search for the assassin was planned and carried out. His record of events that evening at the Peterson House remain the most comprehensive record of the events that followed the President’s shooting.

At the end of the Civil War, Tanner studied law in New York and in 1869 was admitted to the Bar. From 1869 to 1877 he held posts in the New York Customs House and from 1877 to 1885 was Tax Collector in Brooklyn, New York. He...
later founded a Veteran’s organization and spoke at the dedication of the Confederate Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery.

Tanner was quite active in the Grand Army of the Republic. As New York State GAR Commander in 1876, he organized a letter-writing campaign that moved the legislature to establish a soldiers’ home. He was frequently called on to lobby Congress on behalf of veterans.

Tanner was also very active in the Republican Party. Between 1886 and 1888, he made several national campaign tours speaking for presidential candidate Benjamin Harrison. In March 1889 as a reward for these activities, Tanner was appointed Commissioner of Pensions. Declaring his intention to secure maximum possible benefits to “every old comrade that needs it” Tanner proceeded to make hash of administrative procedures and his office’s budget. At length, Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble, of whose Department the Pension Office was a part, was forced to step in, and Tanner resigned in September 1889.

From then until 1904, he was a private pension attorney engaged in prosecuting various claims against the government. In April 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him a Register of Wills for the District of Columbia. In 1905-06 he was the National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic.

James Tanner died at Washington, D.C. on October 2, 1927 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. His wife, Mero T. Tanner (1844-1906), is buried with him.

The above information was obtained from the Arlington National Cemetery website: http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/jtanner.htm

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### DAY BY DAY

#### CALENDAR OF COMING ALA EVENTS

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibit of photographs of Abraham Lincoln statues in Illinois.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron Schramm, Photographer. Atrium of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. The exhibit is free and open to the public.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>ALA Board of Directors Meeting, Springfield</em></td>
<td>Oct. 2, 2009</td>
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<td><em>Dedication: Christopher Smith German Grave Marker, Oak Ridge Cemetery</em></td>
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<td><em>Dinner at Gillett Farm, Elkhart Hill</em></td>
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<td><em>Lincoln Press Conference: University of Illinois, Tryon Festival Theatre, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, 500 South Goodwin Avenue, Urbana</em></td>
<td>Oct. 2, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free and open to the public. Featuring Lincoln presenter George Buss.</td>
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<td><em>24th Annual Lincoln Colloquium, Springfield</em></td>
<td>Oct. 15-18, 2009</td>
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<td>Environmental and Lincoln historians participate in conference on nature’s impact on Lincoln and his generation, and their impact on the environment. Advance registration required. For information call 217-492-4241. Includes 7th Annual Lincoln Legacy Lecture at the University of Illinois Springfield, October 15, 2009, 7:00 p.m. in Brookens Auditorium. Information (217) 206-7094.</td>
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<td><em>Lincoln Symposium</em> Details to be announced.*</td>
<td>Feb. 11-12, 2010</td>
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<td>Hall of Representatives, Old State Capitol, Springfield</td>
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<td><em>Investiture Ceremony: Michael Burlingame to Chancellor Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois Springfield, House of Representatives, Old State Capitol, Springfield</em></td>
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<td><em>ALA Board of Directors Meeting, Springfield</em></td>
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<td><em>Lincoln Day Banquet, 201st Anniversary of Lincoln’s Birth</em></td>
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<td>Crowne Plaza Hotel, Springfield</td>
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