

UpFront

By Naseem Stecker



Judge Ron Lowe in his Abraham Lincoln mode. Next February will mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and Michigan will be celebrating with the rest of the nation. An Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Committee, headed by Dr. William M. Anderson, director of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries, is working to commemorate the event in the state. Judge Lowe and attorney Daniel Schairbaum of the State Bar Public Outreach Committee are members of that group.

Lowe as Lincoln

*"Whatever you are:
be a good one."*

Abraham Lincoln

Ronald W. Lowe is a judge at the 35th District Court in Plymouth. He's also a professional storyteller and has been one for almost 20 years. If there's a ready audience at a school, church, or community group, the good judge is always obliging. He's a celebrity of sorts, and his specialty is Abraham Lincoln stories. An invitation from Douglas Elementary School in Garden City many years ago came with a twist—come and tell stories about Lincoln to a bunch of first graders to recognize the president's birthday, but come as Lincoln! Since Judge Lowe is such an excellent storyteller, I thought I'd let him tell the rest of this story himself.

Hours of preparation and one Lincoln costume rental later, I was enjoying the telling as much as the students were. I also learned two important lessons that day. One, the doubtful students would want proof. Fortunately, my beard was real, as one of the students wanted to tug on it to be sure. And once this is proven, and for the believers, I close by telling them I am not really Lincoln. First graders have an incredible power to believe.

What has evolved is a regular routine of using the month of January to grow the beard,

dying my hair and beard in February, and donning my tailored Lincoln suit, special-order hat, and period-correct shoes to tell stories about Lincoln to young and old.

My stories begin with what we know of Lincoln as a child and young man and end with his practice of law. I try to build character lessons into the storytelling, which is usually not too difficult as Lincoln was a man of good character. I also attempt to teach them something they do not know about Lincoln. This is not as difficult as one would think. Most who study Lincoln study his presidency or the road he took to get there. Young Lincoln and lawyer Lincoln are not as well covered or even covered at all beyond "poor boy born in a cabin splits rails and becomes president."

Late January and early February, you will find me re-reading the stories of Lincoln I have in my collection and often reading something new, for the very reason that I like to learn about Lincoln myself. I am a life member of The Association of Lincoln Presenters and wholeheartedly believe in their motto: "Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all." Unfortunately, I am not able to attend their conferences as often as I would like for a variety of reasons, and I am typically out of character by then, as I only sport my Lincoln beard for a part of February. To do otherwise risks upsetting the marital bliss I experience year round. I believe that my wife puts it this way: "If I had wanted to marry Lincoln, I would have married him instead. I will tolerate Lincoln in February, but then you return to Lowe." ■

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Rose of Aberlone Plaque Replacement on May 13

Almost 15 years ago, a Michigan Legal Milestone was dedicated to Rose of Aberlone, a classic contracts case involving Hiram Walker and Sons, Rose the cow, and the principle of rescission based on mutual mistake. A bronze plaque highlighting the case was placed in Kellogg Park in Plymouth. Unfortunately, that plaque was stolen. A new one has been made and a

short rededication ceremony is planned at the same location on Tuesday, May 13. The Michigan Legal Milestone Program recognizes significant legal cases and personalities in Michigan's rich history. The State Bar Public Outreach Committee oversees it. For more information on the milestone program, visit <http://www.michbar.org/programs/milestones.cfm>. ■

Pro Bono Survey Coming in March

A web-based survey on pro bono will be conducted later this month. Watch your e-mail for the survey and please spare 10 minutes to answer the questions. The information that is gathered will update the first survey done 10 years ago, during the presidency of the Hon. Victoria Roberts. The data on matters like the number of clients assisted, the amount and type of service, the source of client contact, and the motivations for doing or not doing pro bono work will help the State Bar develop its long-range strategic plans. Those without e-mail will receive a postcard with information about how to participate in the survey. The short survey is expected to yield much information that can help an-

swer the often-asked question, "What are all the ways that lawyers are helping?" To obtain an accurate picture, we need your participation in this brief but important survey. Michigan has a voluntary pro bono standard, adopted by the Representative Assembly in 1990, that requires all attorneys to do one of the following: provide representation without charge to a minimum of three low-income individuals, do at least 30 hours of pro bono work per year, or contribute \$300 to the State Bar Access to Justice Fund or an approved legal services program of their choice. More information about the survey will be posted on the State Bar website at www.michbar.org. ■

WLAM Awards Reception to Feature Denise Ilitch

"Success and the confidence factor" will be the theme of keynote remarks by Denise Ilitch, Tuesday, March 18, at an awards reception organized by the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation. Ms. Ilitch will draw on her experiences in business, the nonprofit community, and her of counsel position at Clark Hill, PLC. This

event will take place 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m. at the St. John Conference Center in Plymouth, Michigan. For ticket information, please call Debbie at (734) 762-7260. Reservations or tax-deductible contributions to the WLAMF scholarship fund may also be made at www.wlamfoundation.org. ■