

Few symbols signify death as vividly as a hearse. I notice that a hearse received front page headlines earlier this week; it was (or perhaps I should say "is") a hearse made in Eureka by Eric Hollenbeck and a Blue Ox team that includes many war veterans. The hearse is being built for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abe Lincoln's death; apparently there is a re-enactment at Springfield, Illinois this ~~May~~ <sup>late May</sup>. I was urged by one of my friends to go see it--the hearse not the reenactment. Alas, I got busy and it's now on its way east. Apparently this life-size replica took nine months of tireless effort from Hollenbeck and team, and was reconstructed from an historical photograph of Lincoln's actual hearse. Well, you can't relive the past, but sometimes you can go back and retrieve bits and pieces of it. That is exactly what Mr. Hollenbeck and his team did; and I say, hats off to them for taking on this daunting but noble project—a local ~~project~~ <sup>work of art & craft</sup> that seems to have inspired the time and tireless attention to detail that such projects require.

I have been a long time admirer of President Lincoln and I guess I am not alone, since national memorials have been dedicated and movies are still being made to remember our 16<sup>th</sup> president. What made Lincoln great was not only his power of persuasion through his gift with words, but also his moral character. Lincoln was a man of principle. But he was a war president, you might object—our bloodiest war ever! True enough, yet in my mind he was not a willful, but a reluctant warrior—not wanting to plunge our nation and its young men into a bloody civil war that took more lives than any other before or since. He went to war to save the union; but he also opposed the practice and institution of slavery, at great cost to himself and his nation.

I wish Mr. Lincoln had not been shot at the Theater by John Wilkes Booth. I wish he had served longer as President of our nation. Had he been allowed to do so, I believe we would not have had such lingering bitterness between North and South for the many decades after the Civil War. Lincoln was not, for the most part, a church going man, but he was certainly a man of great character. He read and memorized vast portions of the Bible and exhibited humility in and out of office that is difficult to find these days. His 2<sup>nd</sup> inaugural address reveals his heart to forgive even the bitterest of enemies just before the end of the war.

Yesterday was Ash Wednesday: a day when millions of Christians around the world celebrate the beginning of Lent. Ashes are a symbol of mortality: reminding us that our bodies are frail and quickly pass from dust to dust, ashes to ashes. How brief is our opportunity here to leave a legacy. 150 years after he died, people still take note of what Abraham Lincoln said and did: his legacy is one of courage under fire and forgiveness of his enemies. Our world would do well to elect more leaders like Abe Lincoln—today—yes, especially, today.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment