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"AMERICANA" COLUMN BY CARLTON STOWERS

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THE RAIL-SPLITTER

HISTORIANS IN SPRINGFIELD, ILL., ARE LEARNING MORE ABOUT **PRESIDENT LINCOLN** EVERY DAY



SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

AMERICAN WAY

AMERICAN AIRLINES + AMERICAN EAGLE

BIG BEND

Now is the perfect
time to visit one
of our least-visited
NATIONAL PARKS
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How Raleigh/Durham
landed on the
international video game
map (Pg. 32)

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Spend some time
in Quito, Ecuador
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+

WALKING IN L.A.

(And we don't mean Los Angeles) Pg. 54

TWICE MONTHLY

GIVEAWAY
An American history buff's
DREAM VACATION
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This Story Now Belongs to the Ages

TODAY WAS ONE of the greatest days of my life. It was like having the Super Bowl, the World Series, Christmas, Hanukkah, the Lower Oakland Roller Derby and my birthday all rolled into one. I'm sitting on an American Eagle flight from the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield, Ill., heading back to Dallas — below the Mason-Dixon Line — and back to the brutish realities that non-Ph.D.s face daily. For the last eight hours, I've received the equivalent of a doctorate in my favorite subject: all things about the 16th president of the United States. I was just given a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum by three of the world's foremost Abraham Lincoln authorities. You could have given me a brand-new Maserati and I wouldn't be nearly this excited. I'll try to write coherently as I sit on this plane, but it'll be tough because I'm smiling way too big and giggling way too much, like a 4-year-old girl who just petted a pony. I'm starting to scare the children. Let's look back at the history of how this tour came about.

Our former intern, Christiana Nielson, wrote a poignant and informational roundup ("Executive Privilege," Feb. 15) of all of the presidential libraries that fall under the National Archives and Records Administration's umbrella. Of course, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is a state-run entity, so it doesn't appear on that list and therefore wasn't part of that story. But I didn't clarify the distinction between Lincoln's library and the presidential libraries that were featured in the story. So you, my dear readers, hammered me for the oversight. I deserved it. The story left people confused as to why *American Way* would leave

out information about the Great Emancipator. I was hiding under my desk while that story was on the planes, and then I received an email from Dr. Carla Knorowski, Ph.D., the CEO of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation. As soon as I saw her signature, I stopped reading the letter. I was about to get beaten up by the CEO of the foundation. I sighed aloud and tabled it. I decided to wait a couple of days before reading.

On a Sunday afternoon, after I figured I had enough beer in my system to help soften the blow, I revisited Knorowski's letter.

"Dear Mr. Pitluk: As CEO of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation, I was naturally interested to read about each of the 13 presidential libraries under the direction of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Although not a part of the NARA system of presidential libraries, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and its associated museum are every bit as fascinating and informative." "Here we go," I thought. "Time to take my medicine." Knorowski continued: "Located in Lincoln's hometown of Springfield in the heart of Illinois — the 'Land of Lincoln' — the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum are treasure troves of more than 15 million artifacts and documents. We invite *American Way* readers to come and visit our library and museum and take in a few of the other remarkable sites in Lincoln's Springfield, including Lincoln's home, law offices and the Old State Capitol where Lincoln served as a state legislator. American Airlines can fly you there through American Eagle. Please check us out and begin to explore the historic world of Abraham Lincoln."

"Wow," I thought. "Dr. Knorowski is the real deal." Not only did she keep her shank leashed, but I could have sworn there was an invitation in there for me to visit. Maybe it was the beer talking, but I saw this as the crowning achievement of a life spent reading and reading and rereading everything about Lincoln I could get my hands on. I'm not alone, mind you. There are scores of us wannabe sages of Lincolniana out there who live on message boards and debate every move the 16th president ever made, from his rail-splitting days to his penning of the Gettysburg Address, which was one of the most glorious presidential speeches ever delivered — and which I saw up close under the tutelage of Knorowski; Dr. Ian Hunt, who specializes in antebellum Lincoln history; and Dr. James Cornelius, curator of the Lincoln collection at the library and museum. I was surrounded by three of the most celebrated Lincoln historians in the world. A Lincoln buff, I spent the entire day asking the most exhaustive questions that I'd always wanted the answers to but never had my own Lincoln scholars on hand to ask. Questions like this, for example: When Lincoln succumbed to Booth's bullet and died in the Petersen house, did Secretary of War Edwin Stanton pronounce: "Now he belongs to the ages" or "Now he belongs to the angels"?

But I'm still a rank amateur. Springfield's own Bruce Rushton is the real Lincoln authority when it comes to the media. And his profile of all the amazing things that my Ph.D. tour guides are undertaking will make all you Lincoln lovers run out and buy American Eagle tickets to Springfield.

To Drs. Cornelius and Hunt, I thank you for the most thorough, most enjoyable history lesson I've ever received. And to Dr. Knorowski, I thank you for weaving the modern-day world of Springfield, Ill., into the ongoing Lincoln conversation. And I thank you for not beating me up with the Lincoln-less NARA story. I owe you a fruit basket.


ADAM PITLUK
Editor

@ Enter to win a vacation package for two to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Win the Grand Prize of 50,000 American Airlines AAdvantage miles, a three-night stay for two at the Hilton Springfield, a private tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, lunch at Subway (inside the museum) each day, one annual museum membership at the National Associates Level, a premier gift basket, and admission and assistance with tours to local sites, including the Lincoln Home, the Old State Capitol, the Herndon Lincoln Law Offices and Lincoln's Tomb. Visit www.americanwaymag.com/promotions between midnight CDT on Sept. 15, 2012, and 11:59 p.m. CDT on Sept. 30, 2012.

HANDLE WITH CARE:
Adam with Dr. James Cornelius (left), Dr. Carla Knorowski and the original Gettysburg Address

