



# THE LINCOLN FORUM

# BULLETIN

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**Charles DeForest Platt**  
1931-2006

## *Lincoln Forum Mourns Chuck Platt*

The Lincoln Forum has lost its founding Treasurer and longtime, cherished friend: Charles D. Platt.

Chuck Platt joined fellow founders Frank J. Williams, Harold Holzer and David Long to help launch the Forum at a memorable planning meeting at a Civil War conference in West Palm Beach, Florida, 12 years ago. He went on to back the group's establishment not only with the professional expertise he acquired as a nationally known corporate CEO, but with a substantial personal financial investment as well. Without Chuck's original commitment and tireless devotion to the organization, the Forum could never have staged its first seminar—much less established itself as a thriving national group offering a well-planned annual symposium. Notably, Chuck and Linda Platt reinvested their original support by endowing the Platt Family student essay contest, which has for years encouraged students from around the country to engage with the story of Abraham Lincoln.

Chuck died in Denver on August 5, after a valiant struggle to recover from cardiac surgery, precipitated, and then complicated, by a three-year-long battle with lung sarcoidosis.

He was 75 years young: our emotional rock, our brilliant investment guide, even our hall monitor (no one who ever tried to “crash” the Forum will ever forget Chuck, in his handsome sweaters, serving as the organization's bouncer-in-chief). Though he stayed determinedly behind the scenes, Chuck was front and center in the daily life of The Lincoln Forum. (For readers who notice typographical errors in this edition of the Bulletin, it might be noted that Chuck was our ablest, most patient proofreader, too!)

Chuck's original financial investment was long ago paid in full. But the Forum can never repay him—even in part—for his leadership, patience, generosity, and loyalty to the cause.

## The Past is Prologue

One of our speakers this November is Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of the 750-page *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, which has just been republished in paperback as part of Simon & Schuster's Lincoln Library series. *Team of Rivals* focuses on what the author calls "Lincoln's political genius" in holding the country together during the Civil War. The approach sheds new light on Lincoln, but the real fascination is that the portrait of a nation at war offers lessons about our divisions today over Iraq and the war on terror, which may or may not be linked, depending on which experts one believes.

There are many striking similarities to our current problems, including how the war divided the North and how Lincoln's opponents tried to exploit military setbacks for political gain. There is even a faint echo of freeing the slaves in America's efforts to liberate Iraq and build a stable democracy, except, of course, the liberated slave population was far more receptive to American troops than many of the liberated citizens of modern-day Iraq.

Still, it is appropriate to remind ourselves how perilously close our nation came to permanent division during the Civil War. Northerners fractured along numerous lines, especially how much weight to give emancipation. Lincoln's Republican party was split between committed abolitionists and those less zealous.

Most Democrats were not concerned with emancipation and as the war dragged on, many were ready for peace at any price, even if it meant slavery continuing in the South. Voters in the border states and those living in the Territories had mixed feelings on the subject.



### MESSAGE from the CHAIRMAN

Author Goodwin weaves a compelling narrative that shows Lincoln mixing noble sentiment with flexible tactics and political horse-trading to maintain public support for the war. Part of her clear admiration for Lincoln is that he brought three of his rivals into his cabinet to build consensus and practice inclusiveness, and at the same time maintained an uncanny gift for communicating his administration's war aims to the public at large.

Along the way, she presents personalities and conversations that ring as modern as the recent Congressional debates over Iraq. During a carriage ride, Lincoln and his Secretary of State, William H. Seward, agreed, Goodwin writes, "That one fundamental principle of politics is to always be on the side of your country in a war. It kills any party to oppose a war." Yet as late as 1864, a Northern victory and Lincoln's reelection were still very much in doubt. A Confederate raid came within five miles of Washington and advisors told Lincoln the North had lost confidence in him and he had no chance of being reelected that Fall.

The rest is history—except we may be repeating much of it now.

*Doris Kearns Goodwin*



Little Charles DeForest Platt,  
age 2 in Ames, Iowa.

In Memory of Chuck Platt, a fund has been established to promote the study of Abraham Lincoln.

If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation send to:

The Lincoln Forum Platt Family Educational Fund,  
c/o Russell Weidman, Treasurer, The Lincoln Forum,  
6009 Queenston St., Springfield, VA, 22152-1723.

The Forum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization;  
donations to the fund are 100% tax deductible.

# DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN WINS RICHARD N. CURRENT LINCOLN FORUM AWARD OF ACHIEVEMENT

Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of the triumphant, multiple-award-winning best-seller *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, is the winner of the 2006 Richard N. Current Lincoln Forum Award of Achievement. Ms. Goodwin will accept the annual award in an address at Lincoln Forum XI in Gettysburg, as the capstone event of the three-day symposium—"The Genius of Lincoln"—whose title was inspired by her spectacular achievement.

*Team of Rivals*, published by Simon & Schuster in 2005, sold more than 600,000 copies in hardcover and won the Lincoln Prize, the Barondess/Lincoln Award, the Bostonian History Award, and the first New-York Historical Society Book Prize, among other honors. It was also a biography finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times book prize. The book has just been re-issued in paperback as the cornerstone volume of the new Simon & Schuster Lincoln Library.

"Doris Goodwin has energized the Lincoln field—for historians, the press, and the public—and has helped stimulate a new golden age in scholarship that we are certain will carry through to the Lincoln bicentennial of 2009," said Forum Chairman Frank J. Williams in announcing the award. "Her triumph proves yet again, perhaps more decisively than ever, that fine scholarship, astute judgment, brilliant writing, and engaging appearances before the public, will always attract critical praise and popular acclaim. Everyone in the Lincoln world owes a huge debt to Doris Goodwin—not only for providing us with a fantastically good, unforgettable read, but for re-focusing the national spotlight on our greatest, and most perennially inspiring president. This award helps us to repay that debt."

Added Forum Vice Chairman Harold Holzer, who by tradition will make the official award presentation at the symposium: "Doris Goodwin is one of the most extraordinary historians in the field—a gifted, generous, gigantic talent who has helped take Lincoln off the back burner and place him at full boil for a new generation of Americans. It is hard to imagine a more impactful contribution to the field in our lifetimes."

Doris Kearns Goodwin is the author of several major best-sellers: *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir*, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, and *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt—the Home Front in World War II*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for history. She last appeared at the Forum in 2000, when she offered a memorable report on the progress of her book.

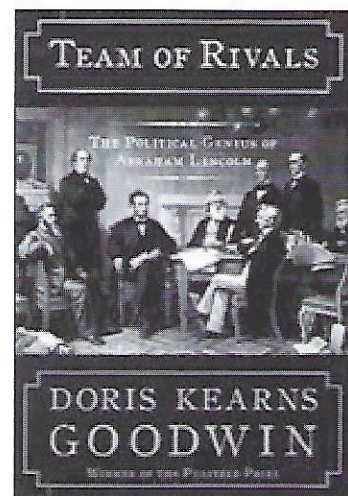
*Team of Rivals* went on to earn the most lavish praise afforded any non-fiction books of recent years. *The New York Times* called it "an elegant, incisive study," and *The Los Angeles Times* praised it as "splendidly, beautifully written...the most richly detailed account of the Civil War presidency to appear in many years." *The Boston Globe* called it "a brilliantly conceived and well-written tour de force of a historical narrative" whose "emotive prose elevates this tome from mere popular history to literary achievement." *The Chicago Tribune* praised it as "riveting

political history." And the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* called it "magnificent" and "vastly readable." A chorus of praise has come from scholars James McPherson, Garry Wills, David Herbert Donald, Douglas Brinkley, Harold Holzer, and Frank J. Williams, among many others.

The Current Award, named for the beloved nonagenarian Lincoln scholar Richard Nelson Current, was won previously by: historian Gabor Boritt (1996), C-SPAN founder and CEO Brian Lamb (1997), "historian of the century" John Hope Franklin (1998), the late Senator Paul Simon of Illinois (1999), biographer David Herbert Donald (2000), scholar Garry Wills (2001), Civil War historian James M. McPherson (2002), actor Sam Waterston (2003), historian/editor John Y. Simon (2004), and sculptor John McClarey (2005)—who for years has provided the statuette, *Freedom River*, awarded to each year's winner. Special awards have also been presented to Forum Chairman Frank Williams on the occasion of the organization's 10th anniversary; and in 2000, at one of his final appearances at the symposium, to the legendary Professor Current himself.



**Doris Kearns Goodwin Greets  
Richard Nelson Current in 2000**





OmahaNorth High Vikings & Forum members John Lastovica, Jim Wilcox, Jim Lastovica, Don Pieper, Chuck Platt

## *Charlie or Chuck?*

### *So much more than just a buffet line marshal*

By Don Pieper

The guy you remember as Chuck Platt, the genial table marshal who made sure the Forum buffet lines moved smoothly, I remember as Charlie Platt.

When we were kids in North Omaha, he was Charlie. And it's still largely memories of Charlie that make me knot my face and sob.

Charlie and I and other pals used to tumble in the dust during freestyle weekend sandlot football games at Miller Park.

We were high school chums. Then, as young marrieds, we both had career-launching jobs in Norfolk, Nebraska. I was in the press box as Charlie, after hitting one into the weeds beyond the barbed-wire fence, struggled in with a home run for the Norfolk town team.

I wrote in the next day's paper that he "chugged" home. He never forgave me. He kept the clipping for years.

Before our paths separated for our middle age, the Platts and the Piepers were both stationed in Omaha. Charlie and Linda, Jan and me. We had good times together with our young families.

During that time, Charlie had to spend a few days in a hospital, and he got a card from his Omaha GMAC colleagues. It said they voted 5-4 to wish him a speedy recovery. He got a big kick out of that and he followed the advice of the majority.

Charlie went on to corporate success with GMAC and then to the leadership of Alamo Rental. He was a big-time player, nationally and internationally.

His achievements were honored by our high school with a Viking of Distinction award. Veterans of the Miller Park skirmishes and Charlie's pals since grade school reconnoitered at the award dinner. That, together with the 50th high school reunion, led to formation of a gang we call the Vampires — nine of us and our wives.

Charlie, always, was a dominant presence among us. He worried about each of us and helped track down a "missing" member from our high school lineup.

It was during an early Vampire get-together that I mentioned casually to Charlie that I heard he was involved in Lincoln and Churchill activities. Those two men are important to me, too, I said. Next thing I knew, Charlie had paid membership fees for us in The Lincoln Forum and the Churchill Centre.

And, as we engaged fully in both organizations, we got to know the Chuck Platt that you know. We saw how seriously he took his leadership positions with both groups. He often would share his frustrations when egos and personalities clashed behind the scenes and he felt it was his personal responsibility to calm things.

Only Harold and Frank know how totally Chuck, supported by Linda and Annette, devoted himself to the Forum. I could tell by his raw enthusiasm as he drove us through the battlefields on our first trip to a symposium at Gettysburg. He relished the opportunity to share his fervor.

Some of us would gather each year for a pre-symposium lunch at Cash Town Inn. Charlie would delight in pointing out the marker back in the bushes every time we went past the spot where the first shot was fired. On the way to lunch; on the way back.

It is important that he and his family have contributed so much to the Forum and its financial health, to its smooth logistics. It is important, too, that you know Chuck Platt was always back there wringing his hands about the details and exerting energy he didn't always have to spare to make sure we had productive, meaningful sessions.

Charlie and Chuck, he was a man I loved and admired. Oh, gosh, we'll miss him.

## USS MONITOR CENTER TO OPEN IN MARCH, ACCOMPANIED BY FORUM-SPONSORED SYMPOSIUM Forum's Craig Symonds to Host

The long-awaited \$30 million, 63,500-square foot *U.S.S. Monitor Center* at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia, will open to the public with a gala celebration on March 9, 2007—the 145th anniversary of the Battle of Hampton Roads and the epic duel between Union and Confederate ironclads that changed naval warfare forever.

The new, state-of-the-art Civil War museum, offering a dazzling combination of artifacts, original documents, paintings, personal relics, and high-tech interactive environments, features displays of the recently excavated and restored relics of the original *Monitor*. The artifacts were rescued from the ship's watery grave off Cape Hatteras, where she sunk in a storm in December 1862. Vast silos of fresh water on public view in the Center's conservation center will now house the ship's original revolving gun turret, engines, and Dahlgren guns, all of which require years of restoration. The *Monitor Center* will also boast such family-friendly features as a "battle theater" that will re-tell the story of the *Monitor-Merrimac* duel, and re-created living quarters of the ironclad's sailors.

A major highlight of the new wing of the Mariners' Museum is an exact-size outdoor steel replica of the *Monitor*, constructed by modern shipbuilders at nearby Northrup Grumman, and set alongside the building in a beautiful park setting. Visitors may walk the deck just as federal sailors did 145 years ago.

The opening weekend will not only feature celebrity speakers, parties, music, and a fireworks display, but also another of the acclaimed Mariners' Family Weekends and Symposiums, co-sponsored as always by The Lincoln Forum.

This year, under the direction of the *USS Monitor Center's* chief historian (and Forum Advisor) Craig L. Symonds, the program will focus on Civil War technological innovation. Speakers will include James M. McPherson, Jeff Johnston, Michael Kochan, Glenn McConnell (on the *Hunley*), Fran Du Coin (on the "infernal machines" of the Civil War), and Harold Holzer on the art and iconography of high-tech naval war. A panel on "Infernal Machines and War: Human, Legal, and Ethical Dimensions" will feature David Mindell, Alex Roland, and Frank J. Williams. For more information, visit [www.MarinersMuseum.org](http://www.MarinersMuseum.org).

Members of the Lincoln Forum are encouraged to attend this once-in-a-generation opening and symposium.

To receive e-mail updates about The Lincoln Forum and other Lincoln news, enter your email address in our automated Email Marketing system.

Add or change your email on the home page of [www.thelincolnforum.org](http://www.thelincolnforum.org)



## RUSS WEIDMAN TO BE NEW TREASURER OF THE LINCOLN FORUM

Longtime Forum member Russell H. Weidman of West Springfield, Virginia, has been named by the Executive Committee to succeed the late Chuck Platt as Treasurer of The Lincoln Forum effective with the annual meeting November 18, when his name will be placed before the full Board of the Advisors, and submitted to the membership for formal election.

Russ graduated with honors from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1956. In 1964 he was awarded a Masters Degree with high honors in High Energy Nuclear Physics. He continued his distinguished career in the Navy as an aviator and aeronautical engineering officer, retiring in 1978 with the rank of Commander.

Russ then joined the engineering firm of Science Applications International Corp., where he worked on numerous technical programs in a distinguished 18-year-long, second career in the private sector. He retired from Science Applications as its Vice President in 1996.

Weidman has served as Treasurer for the Cruise Missile Association, and in addition to his active membership in The Lincoln Forum, belongs to the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia and the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia. He is a supporter of the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust.

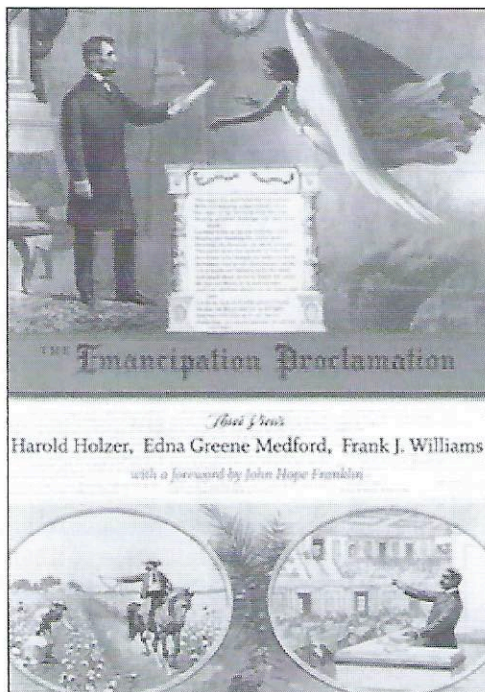
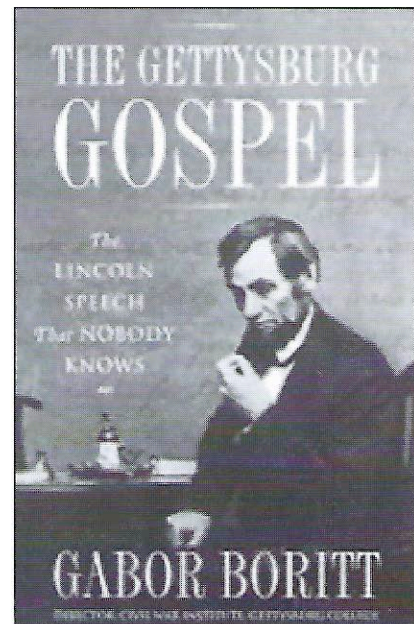
Together with his wife Budge, Russ has also been a longtime volunteer at the National Archives, where the Weidmans have led a corps of retirees and enthusiasts to prepare Civil War records for microfilming and digitization. To the benefit of scholars and researchers for generations to come, they have worked with both the Compiled Military Service records and the Freedmen's Bureau records, and are now working to arrange records and prepare a database of the long-neglected Civil War widows' pension files.

## ON THE LINCOLN BOOKSHELF:

### A MAJOR NEW SEASON OF LINCOLN TITLES

**The Gettysburg Gospel: The Lincoln Speech that Nobody Knows**, by Gabor Boritt (Simon & Schuster). This definitive account of the most famous oration of the 19th Century by the town's long-time leading Lincoln scholar, appraises not only Lincoln's long-mythified creative process, but also the impact of the Gettysburg Address on the town where it was delivered, on the rest of the nation and the world, and on future generations who have adapted its poetic vision for their own causes.

**Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words**, by Douglas L. Wilson (Alfred A. Knopf). A distinguished Lincoln scholar examines Lincoln's most important words-what they meant, and how they were composed. Wilson not only acutely analyzes familiar documents, but usefully reproduces the originals-words occasionally crossed out and replaced, printed matter pasted in whole-to shed fresh light on Lincoln's creative process.



#### **Lincoln and Chief Justice Taney: Slavery, Secession, and the President's War Powers**,

by James F. Simon (Simon & Schuster). The history-altering “competition” between the veteran jurist and the future President over slavery and human rights, and later over the still-relevant issue of executive powers in wartime, is examined in detail by a noted law professor and author. Harold Holzer wrote, “this book fills a gaping void in the Lincoln literature,” and *Publisher's Weekly* rated the book as highly recommended.

**Lincoln's Wrath: Fierce Mobs, Brilliant Scoundrels and a President's Mission to Destroy the Press**, by Jeffrey Manber and Neil Dahlstrom (Sourcebooks Inc.). The latest in the bulging-shelf of anti-Lincoln literature, this book holds that Lincoln ran rampant over press freedoms during the Civil War.

**An Honest Calling: The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln**, by Mark E. Steiner (Northern Illinois University Press). The first book to make extensive use of the Lincoln Legal Papers to re-imagine Lincoln's career as an attorney, historian Peter Karsten calls it “a major step forward in our understanding of Lincoln's law practice.”

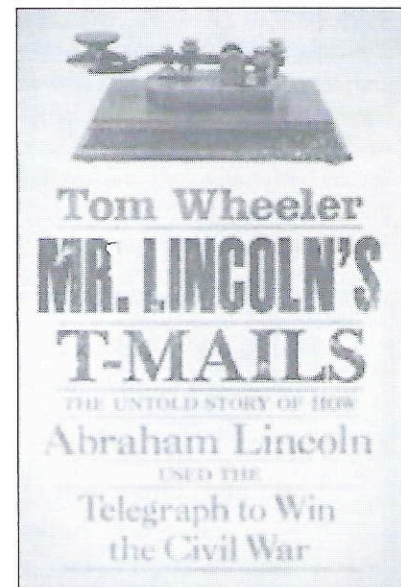
**Herndon's Lincoln: William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik**, edited by Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis (Knox College Lincoln Studies Center and University of Illinois Press in association with the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission). A long-needed annotated republication of the first, and still the most influential, Lincoln biography ever written. Allen C. Guelzo called it “a jewel in the crown” of the “superbly edited documentary editions” produced by Wilson and Davis over the past ten years.

**Lincoln and the Sioux Uprising of 1862**, by Hank H. Cox (Cumberland House), examines the 1862 Indian attacks that led to mass death sentences-and mass pardons by President Lincoln. The book, says Pulitzer Prize winner Clarence Page, “sheds long-overdue light on an episode in Lincoln's life that helped shape the nation.”

**The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views-Social, Political Iconographic**, by Harold Holzer, Edna Greene Medford, and Frank J. Williams, with a foreword by John Hope Franklin (LSU Press). A new look at Lincoln's greatest achievement and its impact on law, society, and political culture. John Marszalek in *The Civil War News* called it “well-researched, well-argued, and well-written...a book that deserves reading by any student of the Civil War looking to understand the conflict's meaning.”

**Mr. Lincoln's T-Mails: The Untold Story of How Abraham Lincoln Used the Telegraph to Win the Civil War**, by Tom Wheeler (HarperCollins). The author, currently president of the National Archives Foundation, tackles a long-neglected and fascinating subject: Lincoln's mastery of the high-tech communications network provided by modern telegraphy.

**Mr. Lincoln Goes to War** by William Marvel (Houghton Mifflin) raises new and provocative questions about why Lincoln chose war to preserve the Union. Peter Carmichael noted: “In prose that burns with passion, Marvel has written a brilliant narrative that reveals the possibilities of the past that were squandered by historical figures who seem so unassailable and God-like to us today.”

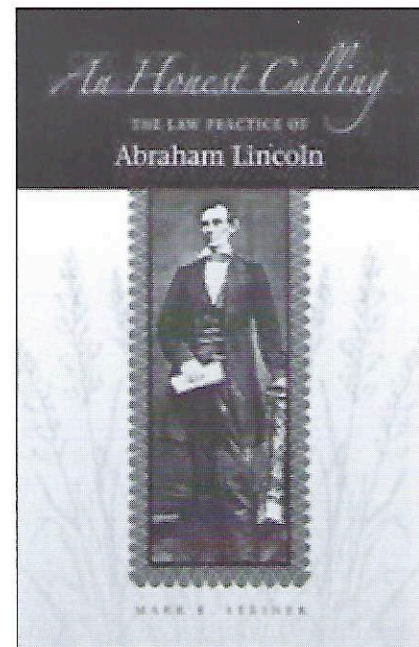


**The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery**, by James Oakes (W. W. Norton). Due in January, this dual biography compares and contrasts the abolitionist crusader and Great Emancipator—and the work they eventually produced together to end slavery in America.

**Father Abraham: Lincoln's Relentless Struggle to End Slavery**, by Richard Striner (Oxford) affirms Lincoln's decades-long determination to deal a fatal blow to slavery. James M. McPherson called this book “fresh and provocative,” adding that it demonstrates “that despite all that has been written about Lincoln, there is still something new to learn.”

**Abraham Lincoln and Illinois' Fifth Capitol** (Second Edition-Revised), by Sunderine Temple & Wayne C. Temple (Mayhaven). A new edition of this intricately researched history of the construction and history of the building where Lincoln delivered his House Divided address in 1858 and lay in state in 1865. Author Wayne Temple has written often about Springfield, and in this update is aided by his wife, a longtime State Capitol guide.

**Lincoln's Defense of Politics: The Public Man and His Opponents in the Crisis Over Slavery**, by Thomas E. Schneider (University of Missouri Press) demonstrates how Lincoln used politics to promote antislavery, becoming more effective than moralists who eschewed political change.



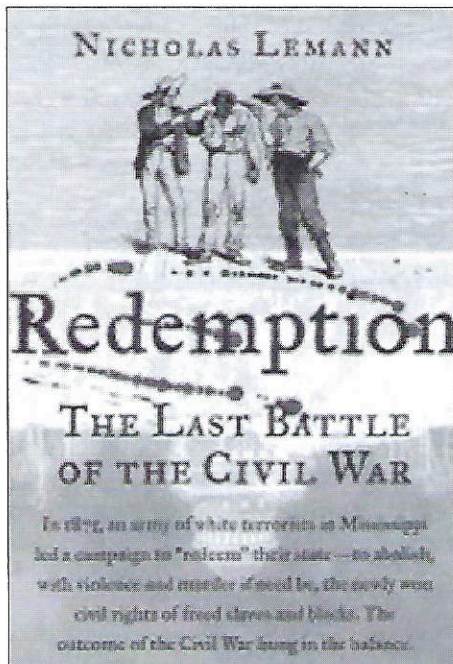
### Related Titles...

**The Battle of Hampton Roads: New Perspectives on the USS Monitor and CSS Virginia**, edited by Harold Holzer and Tim Mulligan (Fordham University Press). Essays by scholars William C. Davis, Craig L. Symonds, and others, shed new light on the war's most famous naval battle—and the recent discovery and recovery of the federal ironclad. *The Fredericksburg Star* called it “highly recommended...a refreshing look at the most significant naval battle of the Civil War from multiple perspectives.”

**A Present for Mr. Lincoln: The Story of Savannah from Secession to Sherman**, by Alexander A. Lawrence (Oglethorpe Press). Georgia's beautiful city—captured by Sherman and “presented” to Lincoln at Christmas 1864—is the subject of this classic, reprinted in memory of its author.

**Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War**, by Nicholas Lemann (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). David Brion Davis called this best-seller “one of the very best accounts of Reconstruction I've ever read,” and Henry Louis Gates declared that this “gripping account of anti-black hatred and violence...brings the history of this roiling period front and center, where it belongs.”

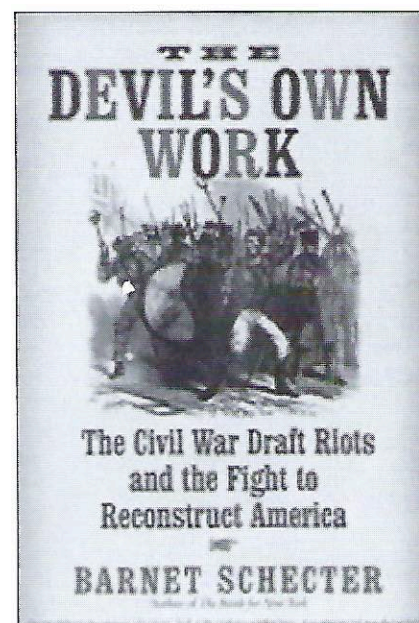
**Worthy Opponents: William T. Sherman and Joseph E. Johnston—Antagonists in War, Friends in Peace**, by Edward G. Longacre (Rutledge Hill Press). Sherman faced Johnston during the war, negotiated his surrender in 1865, and then forged a lasting friendship. Johnston was a pallbearer at Sherman's 1891 funeral where, ironically, he caught the cold that led to his own death, ending a strange story long deserving of a book.

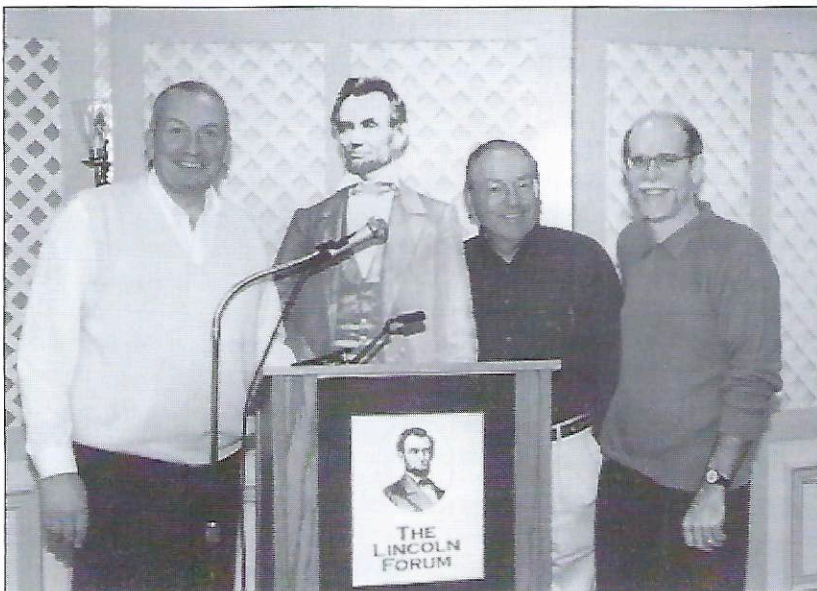
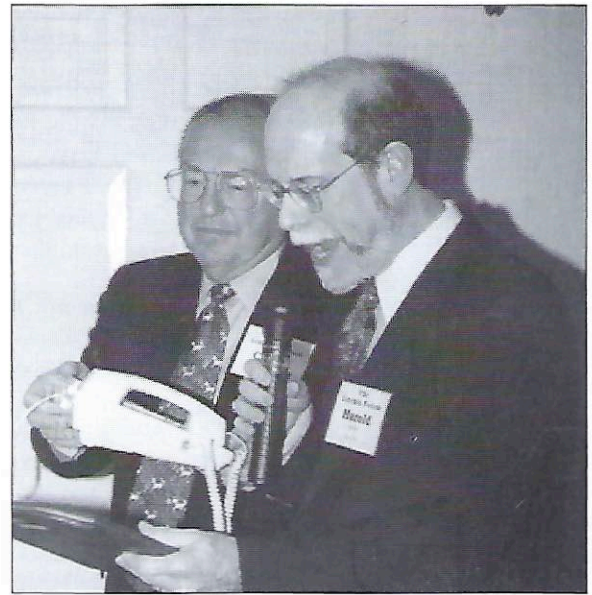
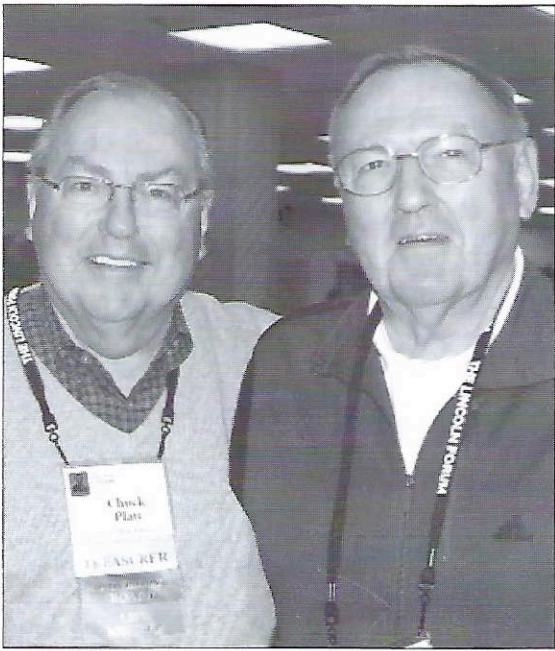


**Frederick Douglass and the Fourth of July: An Oration**, by James A. Colaiaco (Palgrave/Macmillan). Another book to take a close look at a single, watershed political speech, this account of a great 1852 abolitionist oration was praised by author Philip Dray as “a compelling story” of Frederick Douglass's “indispensable role in nineteenth-century America.”

**Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery**, by Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jennifer Frank (Ballantine Books), points an accusing finger at the Northern cities—and citizens—who not only acquiesced in sustaining Southern slavery but, the authors charge, profited from it themselves.

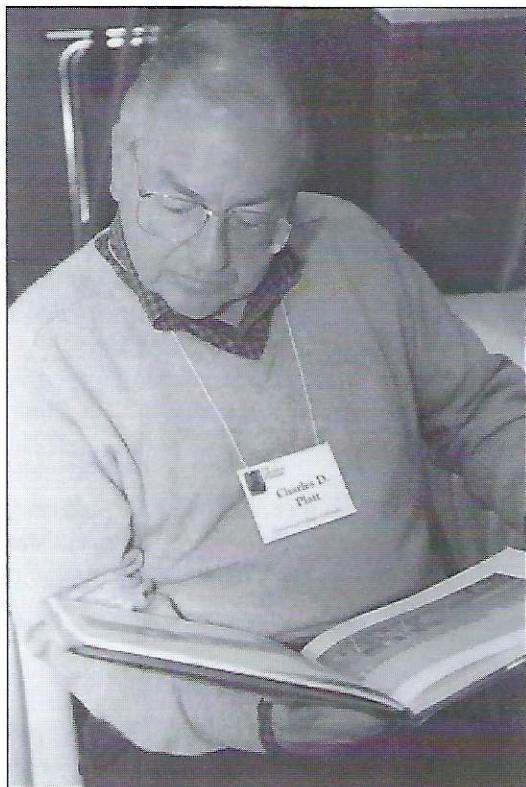
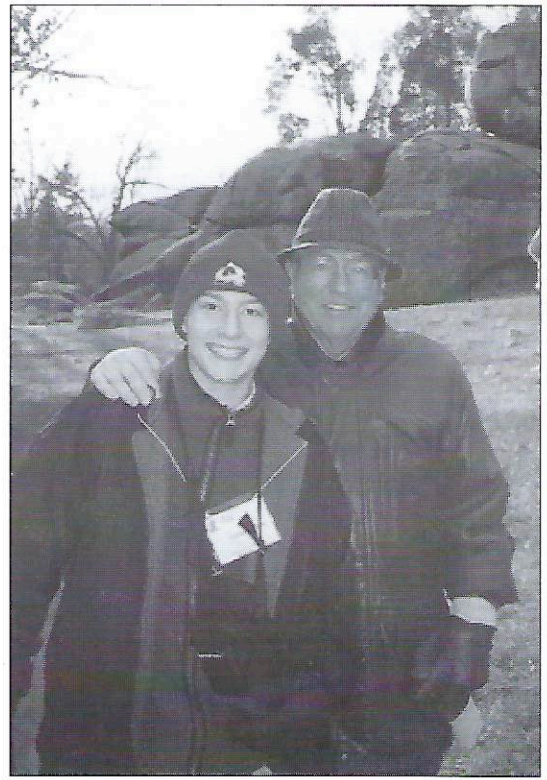
**The Devil's Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and the Fight to Reconstruct America**, by Barnett Schecter (Walker). This ambitious story of the worst civil disturbance in American history—save for the Civil War itself—was praised by James McPherson as “the most detailed narrative” of the event yet written.







# REMEMBERING CHUCK PLATT: 1931-2006



# Charles DeForest Platt

## Featured Obituary from Denver papers

Charles D. Platt, the retired President of Alamo Rent A Car and co-founder and longtime Treasurer of The Lincoln Forum, died in Denver, Colorado, Saturday, August 5, of complications from surgery. He was 75.

Nineteen years ago, in 1987, only months after concluding a 34-year-long career with General Motors Acceptance Corporation (GMAC), Platt agreed to return to the automotive industry, becoming President and Chief Operating Officer of the Fort Lauderdale-based Alamo. In eight years there, he helped to establish the firm's unique brand identity and launch it as a legitimate competitor to Hertz and Avis. Platt retired from the industry for the second and final time in 1995.

That year, together with Lincoln scholars Frank J. Williams, Harold Holzer and others, he co-founded the national organization The Lincoln Forum. Platt also personally provided the seed money to establish the group, and then administered its first symposium in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The Forum, now 700 members strong, held its 10th annual symposium last November, and shortly before his final hospitalization, Platt reported that the 11th symposium, scheduled to take place in Gettysburg in three months, would be another record-breaking sellout.

Platt had served since the group's founding as Lincoln Forum Treasurer and member of its Executive Committee, and, together with his wife, Linda, sponsored an annual essay-writing competition for college students. The Platt Family Essay Contest offers annual scholarships for the best compositions on Abraham Lincoln.

Platt also served as Vice President of the international organization The Churchill Centre, and only recently helped to organize, and had planned to help lead, the group's annual meeting in Chicago—which, at his suggestion, explored the theme of Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln.

Charles DeForest Platt—known as “Charlie” to his early friends and “Chuck” to those he knew in later life—was born on July 31, 1931 in Highland Park, Michigan one of three children of Clarence DeForest and Gertrude Murray Platt. Clarence was a Harvard educated landscape architect, designing water features and gardens for the newly rich Detroit auto industry executives. Gertrude was the youngest woman graduate of Iowa State University, graduating with a degree in Home Economics at the age of 18. After losing the business in Detroit due to the market crash, the Platt family moved to Omaha, Nebraska. Charles held many summer jobs as a youth, including grocery clerk, paperboy, corn-husker, radio station errand boy and pin-setter. At North High, Chuck made fierce friends whom he kept up with for over fifty years as North High Vikings.

Platt graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1953, and immediately joined GMAC as a field representative for western Nebraska—his first job was repossessing cars. It was while working throughout Nebraska and Iowa, which he did over the next thirteen years, that he met his future wife, Linda Lou Jacoby. They married in 1955 and had three children — Murray Platt, Annette Platt Westerby, and Mason Platt. Mason died in infancy.

Platt eventually rose to the position of branch manager of GMAC's New York office, and then in 1981 became its Vice



### Platts in the era of Abraham Lincoln

**The oldest Platt family photo, a daguerreotype taken in Edgewood, Iowa in 1858. Nathan and Margaret Platt holding Lavern DeForest Platt, Charles DeForest Platt's grandfather.**

President of International Operations. During his tenure in New York he received his MBA from Columbia University.

After his 1995 retirement from Alamo, Platt moved with his family to the Denver suburb of Greenwood Village, Colorado and pursued his lifelong interest in history on a full-time basis. The Platts also had a home in Grand Lake, Colorado, in the Rocky Mountains. Platt was a member of the Rocky Mountain Civil War Round Table, the Sons of Union Veterans, and the Lincoln-Douglas Society. At his death, he was also a board member of the Ulysses S. Grant Association, and a member of the Board of Advisors of the U. S. Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

Platt is survived by Linda, his wife of 51 years, their son Murray Platt and daughter Annette Platt Westerby, both of Centennial, Colorado, four grandchildren: Megan Westerby, Matt Westerby, Grant Platt, and Trevor Platt; a brother, John Murray Platt, two sisters, Cynthia Murray and Ann Baugh, and many nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held Saturday, August 12, at St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colorado. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that friends please donate to a charity of their choice, or contribute a book about Abraham Lincoln to a local library. Contributions can also be made in Chuck Platt's name to The Lincoln Forum Platt Family Educational Fund ([www.thelincolnforum.org](http://www.thelincolnforum.org)), c/o Russell Weidman, Treasurer, The Lincoln Forum, 6009 Queenston St., Springfield, VA, 22152-1723. The Forum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, donations to the fund are tax deductible.

# MEMORIES OF CHUCK PLATT

By Harold Holzer

Memorial Service at Denver, Colorado

August 12, 2006

I was the new Chief Press Officer at the Metropolitan Museum—knew nothing, knew no one—when Edith and I arrived at our first big dinner for the opening of the exhibition *American Impressionism*. Expecting to be relegated to the back of the room with journalists—where I belonged—I found we were assigned to Table 2—with the exhibition funder.

There must be some mistake. No, I learned: the President of our corporate sponsor, Alamo Rent A Car, had specifically asked for me to join his party. So there, in our glorious Engelhard Court, at the center table, we met for the first time a tuxedo-clad Chuck Platt and his Linda. He extended his hand, gave me a warm smile, and announced: “I’m a big Lincoln fan. I’ve read your books and I really wanted to meet you.”

We talked all night—not about Impressionism or museums or rent-a-cars, I confess—but about history. It was the start of a truly beautiful friendship. One that has changed and enriched my life.

I don’t know anyone who had more old friends, and needed fewer new friends, than Chuck Platt. He had a wealth of friends—from college, business, and his history groups. Yet he sought, and made, new friends all the time—for himself, for the benefit of his other friends, and for all the organizations he blessed with his leadership. He was such a natural, gifted organizer he couldn’t help bringing everyone together—connecting old and new. Generous to a fault, he even shared his pals. It was just another aspect of Chuck’s legendary generosity. A few more examples:

He always hosted both an annual pre-Lincoln Forum lunch and dinner in Gettysburg. Chuck didn’t need-or ask-to be the center of attention at either—just for the pleasure of knowing that everyone was together.

The dinner was on Chuck, including all the wine we could drink...and Frank Williams and I can drink wine. The lunches—which came to all of six dollars a person—were Dutch treat, just so we could keep our dignity, I guess—although every time the check came, I could see Chuck instinctively reaching into his pocket for his well-worn credit card... it was hard for the perfect host not to be perfectly generous all the time.

Gettysburg itself had been a magnet for Civil War enthusiasts for nearly 150 years. Chuck made it more so. Another decisive moment—another life-changing event—came at Palm Beach in 1994—at the end of a Civil War conference, not a hugely successful one, that we’d all attended. Why not, Frank Williams and I suggested that night, create a national Lincoln association that would meet every year and stage really terrific events?

The ideas flew: center the event at Gettysburg, invite top historians, send out mailings (the world wide web barely existed). Yes, Frank and I said, let’s do it.

Now, Frank Williams is a great judge, military commander, and administrator; and I’m a fairly proficient PR person. But usually when either of us says “let’s do it,” we don’t exactly mean that we’re going to do it—or even that we know how to do it. But Chuck Platt was in the room that day The Lincoln Forum was born. And he did do it. He not only did it, he paid for it—advancing the seed money to launch the Forum, not knowing when or whether ever he’d recoup his loan. Seven hundred members and 10 sell-out symposiums later, we long ago offered to make Chuck financially whole—he, in turn, left The Lincoln Forum on firm organizational

footing for the future. But he didn’t take his investment back, of course: he used it to fund a scholarship program for the year’s best student essays on Lincoln.

I guess it couldn’t go on forever. Last Lincoln’s birthday we were all in Washington together for a meeting.

Chuck took us aside one night for a talk. We feared the worst. Chuck had been ailing, forcing himself to continue working—and we expected him, with good reason, to call it quits. As usual, he put his cards on the table. I’m not well, he said. I’ve got this darn lung problem. I don’t know how long God will give me. If you want to replace me, I understand. But I want to keep going as long as I can.

And he did—with undiminished enthusiasm and efficiency—sending us emails until just before he entered the hospital whenever he accepted a new Forum member or acknowledged a registration—putting everything in place in his typical orderly, reassuring, perfectly—organized way for Forum XI. Taking care of business, taking care of us—right to the end.

Chuck had three careers: GMAC, Alamo, and history organizations. We’re so grateful we got to share part of his third—maybe, as Churchill would have said, his “finest hours.” People may not always remember the Alamo—at least the rent-a-car Alamo—but hundreds of his newest friends will never forget Chuck and what he did once he left business for the business of history and the love of lifelong learning.

We had some differences along the way—usually about politics (I was his token liberal Democrat friend, I guess). We had some battles royal about my old boss, Mario Cuomo, and I’m sure we would have had lots of good fights about Hillary Clinton this coming year; I’ll miss that. Even more, I’ll miss his wise counsel: and Chuck, thanks forever for the best advice I ever got about the job offer I had from the Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield. I was worried that I would hate Springfield, but Chuck stood that argument on its head: you’re from New York, he said. They don’t understand the pace—they’ll hate you. He was honest, too.

We will miss his unflappable calmness and competence, that gift for bringing people together, his deep interest in young people—not only the grandchildren in whom he took such loving pride—but all young people, eager that they learn about our past in order to illuminate their future. And, of course, we will miss his generosity—of spirit and mind, in real and symbolic terms alike, offered with no strings and no need for the spotlight. How to sum up the Chuck Platt way? Maybe with the final words of Lincoln’s second inaugural...because they certainly could have been said about Chuck—by Lincoln, by us, or by anyone who ever came into his graceful presence.

*“With malice toward none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right. Let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”*

Words that guided the irreplaceable Chuck Platt—and in Chuck’s honor, in the glow of his bright and shining memory, can yet, if we live by his spirit, guide all of us...all of us who are so in his debt and will remain so as long as we are privileged to continue reaping the rewards of his unforgettable influence on us all.

Lincoln once said, “the better part of one’s life consists of his friendships.” Chuck, you were indeed the better part of our lives.

## Charles D. Platt

St. Gabriel the Archangel Episcopal Church

August 12, 2006

Remarks by  
Chief Justice Frank J. Williams

Thank you Father Chris Ditzenberger.

Linda, Annette, Murray — the entire Lincoln Forum family extends to you and your family their deepest sympathy and condolences upon the occasion of your great loss. We hope that the sadness which must now be yours will soon pass and that you will remember the good times — as there were many.

The outpouring of affection and respect for Chuck is proof positive of what Abraham Lincoln once wrote, "The better part of one's life consists of his friendships."

Chuck Platt lived a remarkable life. He had what we call — a great ride.

Chuck was a leader. He could impose his will by tact and patience. He was neither a rebel nor a conservative, but a conserv-er. His life was an infinitely varied mixture of leading and follow- ing, conforming and defying. He contemporized, compromised and maneuvered. But he always held to his view. He was an indi- vidual in the special double sense that Americans attribute to the word — the common man who was yet uncommon. He loved his family, friends and history, especially The Churchill Centre and The Lincoln Forum for which he was a co-founder serving as treasurer from the beginning to the end.

Chuck possessed many of Lincoln's characteristics. Hardworking, he was bright, loved to be around people, could listen and make you feel like you were the most important person in the room, had a wry sense of humor and loved politics.

Today's citizens can only wish for Chuck's qualities. He was politic without being unprincipled, patient without being resigned, flexible without being opportunistic, tough-minded without being brutal, determined without being fanatical, religious without being dogmatic, and devoted to people without worship- ing them.

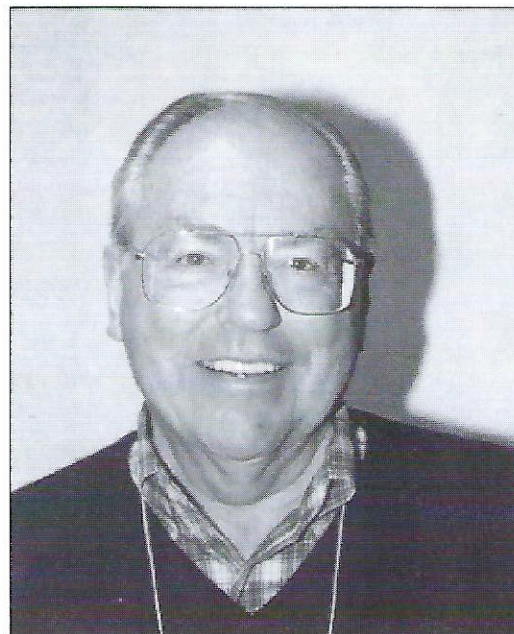
Winston Churchill said that courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities . . . because it is the quality which guarantees all others.

What Chuck had was political courage.

He was clear and self-confident in his beliefs. He trusted his own judgment and while he may have made mistakes, they were not mistakes of self-doubt.

He knew his own mind. One gets the impression that Chuck would sacrifice everything before betraying these creeds which to many seem old-fashioned today — loyalty, patriotism, family, integrity, honor.

And how did Chuck Platt say he would like to be remem-bered? Something of it is in the present occasion — in the atmos-phere of this church — in his life's work that we remember and honor.



When Abraham Lincoln's beloved friend, Owen Lovejoy died, friends wrote to Lincoln and he replied that the pressure of duties kept him from joining them in efforts for a marble monument to Lovejoy, the last sentence of Lincoln's letter saying:

*Let him have the marble monument along with the well-assured and more enduring one in the hearts of those who love liberty, unselfishly, for all.*

Today we may say, perhaps, that the well-assured and most enduring memorial to Chuck Platt is invisibly there, today, tomorrow and for a long time yet to come. It is there in the hearts of all those who love liberty and all those things that stand for decency. It is there in the men and women who understand that wherever there is freedom, justice, and decency, there have been those who fought, toiled and sacrificed for it. No one could ask for a more enduring legacy.

Shakespeare said, "The good men do is often interred with their bones."

That will not be the case here.

The poet, Edwin Markham, wrote for Abraham Lincoln,

*And when he fell in whirlwind, he  
went down  
As when a lordly cedar, green with  
boughs,  
Goes down with a great shout upon  
the hills,  
And leaves a lonesome place  
against the sky.*

Chuck's passing has left indeed a lonesome place against the sky.



If you have news to share — on your Lincoln or Civil War organization, activities, or studies — send it for inclusion in the next Bulletin to:

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