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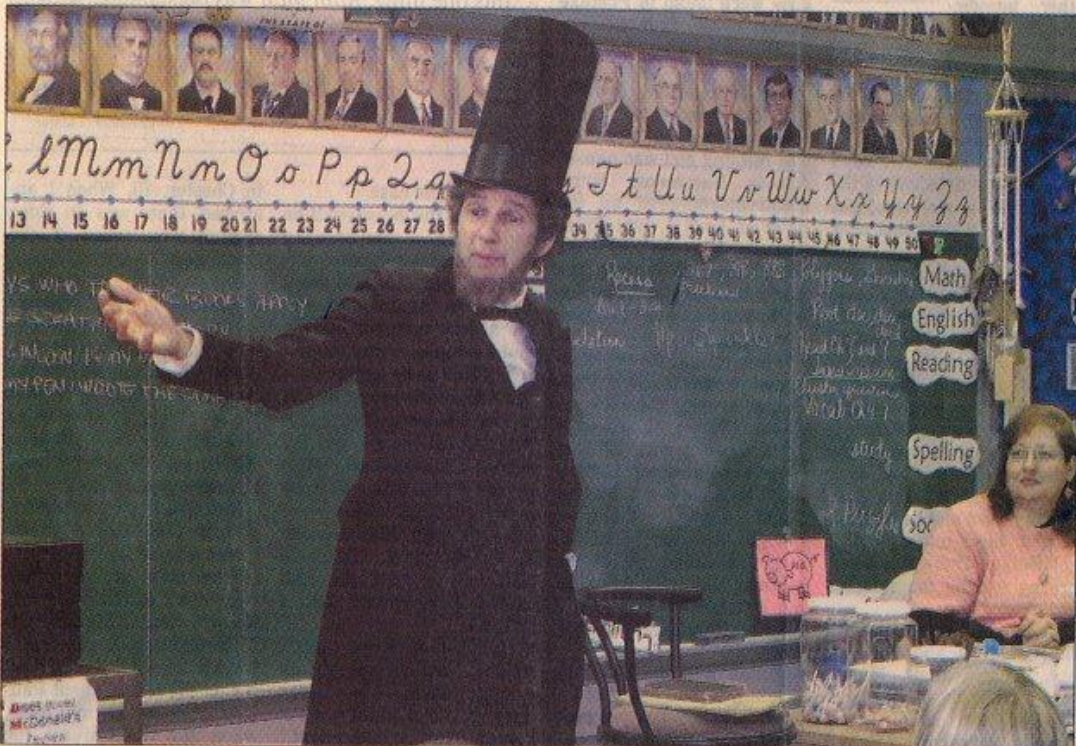


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Honest Abe visits Sweetser



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STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE — Abraham Lincoln impersonator Danny Russel speaks to a fourth-grade class at Sweetser Elementary School on Thursday about history and the importance of reading and being honest. *Make this image yours. Go to www.chronicle-tribune.com.*

BY COURTNEY FLYNN
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SWEETSER — The 16th President of the United States visited the fourth-grade classes at Sweetser Elementary on Thursday.

As the students sat wide-eyed and attentive listening to the tall man with a beard, extra-tall black top hat and suit to match, the resemblance between the real Abraham Lincoln and his impersonator, Danny Russel, was uncanny.

Russel is a professional Lincoln impersonator and interpreter from Indianapolis.

Each fourth-grade class

was able to experience Russel as Lincoln for 45 minutes.

During his presentation, Russel told the students about Lincoln's life from the time he was a young boy until he gave the Gettysburg Address. In between highlighting the major historical moments in Lincoln's life, Russel also gave the students life lessons.

"Remember, my success in life came from reading," Russel told the students.

He also insisted that honesty and integrity are key character aspects.

"I believe in integrity, I believe in honesty," he announced to class before discussing Lincoln's views on slavery.

Acting as Lincoln, he also told the students why the Emancipation Proclamation was his greatest accomplishment. He told the students how everyone, no matter what race, age or gender, should be treated as equals and this why slavery was abolished.

Fourth-grader Max Stefanatos said Lincoln's story reminded him about the importance of putting friends and families first and not even thinking about one's income or color.

Max's classmate, River

Smith, said he thought the Lincoln reenactment was a good learning experience because they needed to be reminded of history so they don't repeat it.

"Sometimes we don't always remember what (Lincoln) said, so it was good to see and hear it in person," fourth-grader Anysley Vermilya said.

The students said they had been learning about the Civil War in class, so it was a nice change of pace instead of reading from a book. However, when asked, all of the students agreed reading is an important skill to have.

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