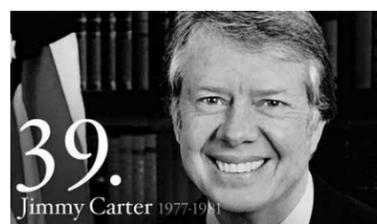
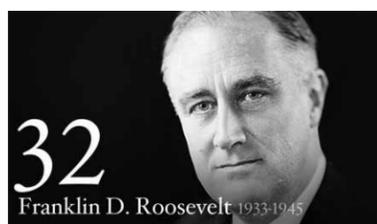
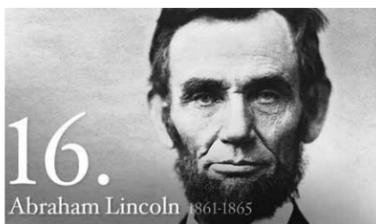


Obama and his predecessors

By Don Lein

Already, President Obama is being compared to former presidents by others and by himself.



He chose to be sworn in by placing his hand on Abraham Lincoln's bible. That seemed symbolically appropriate since the first African-American President was sworn in on the bible of the man who freed the African-Americans from slavery. That is the conventional wisdom, however it depended upon where they were enslaved. The Emancipation Proclamation reads in part "slaves within any State or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be... forever free." It then went on to specify what these regions were. The London Spectator saw the hypocrisy in Lincoln's actions and stated "The principle (of the Proclamation) is not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States." The war was going badly and Lincoln was aware that England and other European powers might help Confederates. However, these countries had recently outlawed slavery themselves and if the war could be made to appear as one

over the issue of slavery he might forestall their helping the South. Lincoln was politically astute, but perhaps not the best role model.

Another President that many observers are comparing Obama to is FDR. Clearly they both followed Republicans who thought they could spend their way out of economic hard times and failed. FDR's economic record is something not even Obama's enemies would wish upon him. After eight years of the New Deal, unemployment remained at 15 percent in 1940. Even his admirers admit that his policies led to a sharp recession in 1937-38. Democrats lost 81 seats in the House and polling for the 1940 elections indicated a strong Republican upsurge. Roosevelt had sent a letter to his party indicating he did not want to run. In late 1939 war had broken out in Europe and by June 1940 France had fallen. The party and later the country turned to Roosevelt, not, as he put it later, as Dr. New Deal, but as an experienced leader when the nation was facing grave peril. FDR as a

wartime leader was inspirational and successful, rescuing his image and permitting us to forget his economic failures. Again, not a great role model.

The last president that is mentioned is Jimmy Carter. Commentators suggest that the only way in which we will be able to handle the huge debt is to turn to actions that will produce rampant inflation. They further suggest that we will reach the gold at the end of the Keynesian rainbow and revisit stagflation. That would ensure that he would be a one-term President. If he follows Jimmy Carter's feckless foreign policy, he would have a good shot at unseating Carter as the worst President in the modern era. No, Carter is not a very worthwhile role model.

Let's hope for the country's sake that the president and his advisors do not try to emulate idols with clay feet.

Don Lein is a Chatham resident who is involved in a variety of civic organizations.

Newspapers are free to...

Since so many newspapers seem to be losing money we should stop and consider one of America's most precious gifts, Freedom of the Press.

There is nothing complicated about this freedom. A newspaper does not have to get a government permit to print a paper. There are no rules of ownership. Any citizen who has the energy and brains is free to start a newspaper at any time. Of course a press is usually necessary but a newspaper is free to be written in long hand on tablet paper.

A newspaper is free to write news and free not to write news. A newspaper can be an advocate or it might be an adversary but no permits are required for either. A newspaper is free to take a position and free not to take one. It is free to have opinions and free not to have opinions. It is free to care; it is free to forget.

A newspaper has all the freedoms that any American citizen has. It is free to question what its government does and freed not to ask questions. It is free to be right and free to be wrong on any issue. It has the right to probe office holders and free to leave them alone.

A newspaper is free to criticize public conveyances, public parks, public welfare programs, local or national police, judges, constables, and school-crossing guards if it believes

any of those entities are harmful to the public or private citizens.

Media Meditations

by R.L. Taylor



A newspaper is free to be a good newspaper and it is free to be a bad newspaper and there are no laws that can set those standards. Nor is that standard subject to local, state or federal review.

The average reader always thinks that is an awful lot of freedom—and it is.

But there is one other gigantic and often unnoticed freedom. Newspapers are free to go broke when they fail the communities they serve.

If hard-up newspapers take government funds they are no longer newspapers and no longer free and not to be trusted on any issue involving the public welfare.

R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He has been a newspaperman for more than 50 years, working as a reporter, editor and publisher. He has also been an advisor to newspapers in Slovakia, Romania and Russia.

Letters to the editor

TO THE EDITOR:

Support our future with a bus from Pittsboro to Chapel Hill.

A couple of months ago, I rode from Research Triangle Park to Pittsboro during rush hour(s) with a friend. I was amazed at how long it took.

Looking out the window at the thousands of other creeping cars, trucks and SUVs I asked, "You do this every day?" "Yep, five days a week!" my friend replied. Wow, what a waste of time, fuel and clean air, I thought — thank goodness we're going to get a bus soon!

I had been to a couple of the town meetings to show my support for bus service from Pittsboro to Chapel Hill and thought all was going well. But last night, I found out that the bus has been voted down!

Apparently, the Pittsboro Commissioners feel the town cannot afford the expense of a bus, even though half the cost will be covered by a grant. I think we cannot afford to pass up this opportunity. We cannot afford to stay in the dark ages of long, polluting, one person per vehicle commutes.

— Camille Armantrout, Moncure

TO THE EDITOR:

I am pleased to hear about the great environmental work of the county commissioners in Chatham County. A concern that has come to light is that the Haw River Watershed that begins in Orange County was never given protected status. I can think of no reason why, except that the water runs into Chatham rather than Orange. A line on a map got in the way!

Of greater concern is that Orange County, against all reason, is poised to build an industrial waste transfer facility in this watershed. It would be sited at the headwaters of Collins Creek, upstream from numerous protected aquatic species. The land that is being pursued does not perk, so run-off into tributaries is normal. Constant truck traffic and oil runoff, and whatever water and leachate systems are constructed (still an unknown as there is no water and sewer service available), are all likely contaminants of the groundwater. The facility would be sited adjacent to active wetlands.

Orange County commissioners do not like the site either but committed to this path in December anyway. Fortunately there have been numerous delays on the purchase, and our community group (Orange County Voice) has been offering viable options — including using local waste vendors until a reasonable site is found near adequate infrastructure.

Since the waste transfer station places unnecessary risks on the quality of water that flows into Chatham County to the Haw River and Jordan Lake, I'd think that concerned Chatham County citizens would want to oppose this facility siting in the short-term and seek watershed protection in the long-term. If you share a concern with your neighbors just north of the Chatham /Orange county line, please contact the Orange County Commissioners and let them know. www.co.orange.nc.us/contact.htm

For more information on the waste transfer station, including Orange County's environmental report and expert responses, go to: www.orangecountyvoice.org/hottopics/wastetransferstation.html

Thank you.

— Virginia Leslie, Orange County Voice

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for printing Carole Hoffman's (March 2009) article, "Oddenino's Healing Touch." I have one detail to add. In 1951, when I had (and healed) hepatitis, the virus was not known at the level it is now and therefore the distinctions between the types of hepatitis and treatment were not what they are today. The hepatitis that ran rampant among the staff at St. Vincent's was food-borne, traced to a member of the kitchen staff. Food-borne hepatitis is now classified primarily as Type A.

— Kathy Oddenino