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Local News

Loving Mr. Lincoln: A special portrayal of life as the wife of Abraham Lincoln

By Diane Wilkins, Marion Daily Republican

MARION — M. Kay duPont spent three years immersed in the life and emotions of Mary Todd Lincoln in order to write her book "Loving Mr. Lincoln: The Personal Diaries of Mary Todd Lincoln."

Out of that research came "An Evening With Mary and Abraham Lincoln," which was performed Tuesday on the stage of the Marion Cultural and Civic Center.

"I became so involved in the research, that sometimes I felt what Mary felt," duPont said after the performance.

The audience is treated as special guests at a reception in The White House as Mary looks back on her life with the 16th President.

From her recollections and entries in her diary, she takes the audience from the first meeting of the couple through the many ups and downs in their lives.

She shares with the "group of dignitaries" that she and the President will not be able to stay with them for the evening's celebrations because they are going to Ford's Theater for a performance.

DuPont masterfully takes the audience on the roller coaster of emotions of the controversial First Lady.

She recalls how she encouraged and quietly pushed the shy Lincoln to the presidency, the great joy in the birth of their sons and the bottomless depths of despair in the deaths of several of those children.

The audience learns firsthand about Mary's disappointment when the young Lincoln left her at the altar, shares her pain, and experiences her frustration when Lincoln's political career seemed to be at end. She shares her heartbreaking thoughts on slavery and the Civil War.

The actress is able to change emotions effortlessly so the audience has a feel for the emotionally mercurial lady whose moods were well known at the time of her stay in The White House. Even though she was often treated harshly in history, the audience comes away with a sympathy and better understanding of the lady behind the President.

In addition to Tuesday night's performance, duPont also gave a matinee performance for school children and spent time talking with them about her character.

Following the play, a reception and book signing afforded the audience the opportunity to meet duPont and Jeff Disend, who portrays the shadowy Abe Lincoln.

