



## **The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives**

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## **The Lincoln Highway Comes of Age**

*A Nationwide Millennium Project*

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September 21, 2003

Dear Fellow Fire Fighters,

Greetings from The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives in Galion, Ohio.

While I am not a fire fighter in real life, I can assure you I am one in Spirit.

As many of you may know, I recently completed a 2 year 15,000 mile odyssey across the Continent on The Lincoln Highway in the "Spirit of the Lincoln Way" a 1964 Maxim-Open Cab 100 foot ladder truck, originally in service in Marietta, Ohio.

Starting in July of 2000 in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, then traveling to New York City and Times Square, the Eastern Terminus of the Nation's First Transcontinental Highway, I began what The New Jersey Journal calls a "Long Journey into History".

Charged with a Mission from President Clinton and The White House Millennium Council to "Honor the Past-Imagine the Future" and "Keep Alive...The Sacred Fire of Liberty" I set out to carry "The Sacred Fire" and fly the American Flag from the ladder in all 450 cities on The Lincoln Highway to commemorate a similar trip in 1915. Along for the ride was a special guest, Abraham Lincoln, in the form of a picture and lock of his hair on loan from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

The first stop in every town was always the fire station, where we were always greeted with open arms, friendly conversation and a willingness to assist in our Mission, no matter what the hour. Many times we shared a meal and were offered a warm bunk in support of our quest. In addition, fuel and funds were often donated as was an occasional opportunity to "Go Along for the Ride" as you went about your work. On several occasions, we even "bunkered up" and lent a hand as the situation required.

When we finally arrived in San Francisco on the 4th of July after 10 months on the road, the Oakland and San Francisco Fire Departments escorted the "Spirit" across the Bay Bridge into the city. There we planted the American and Lincoln Highway Flags and reclaimed Lincoln Park as the End of the Lincoln Highway.

Later I took Mr. Lincoln to the Beach and fulfilled a life long dream to dip his big toe in the Pacific Ocean. Finally...after two long years we had realized our dream and accomplished our mission, but we owe it all to the constant support aid of the Firemen!!

On September 11th I was sound asleep at the Fire Station in Goshen, Indiana when one of the firemen woke me up and said, "They just hit the World Trade Tower..."

For the remainder of the day, I like the rest of the world watched in disbelief as events continued to unfold. The next day, I decided to continue the journey across the Continent in honor of those lost and changed the "Guest Book" to a "Book of Remembrance". In addition, I added a 9 foot 11 inch chain to the rigging, and for the next 30 days the flags flew at half staff.

Since I was the only guy in the United States traveling across the country in a fire truck carrying "The Sacred Fire of Liberty" that had spoken to Chief Downey and visited with the fellows of Rescue 1 and Ladder 8, that had a symbolic photo of the "Spirit of the Lincoln Way" in front of the WTC and was meeting with firemen and flying the American Flag in every city across America, that put me in a unique position and added to the significance of my mission.

Wanting to do something special, I asked the Chief in Cedar Rapids to sign a Helmet in tribute.

When I got to Valley, Nebraska it was full, so one of the guys said, "We've got an extra helmet." and started the tradition of each Department signing a helmet. To date there are 114 on board.

The plan was to send the helmets to the Chief in New York, but that quickly blossomed into this.

One night...October 31st, Halloween and the 90th Anniversary of the Dedication of the Lincoln Highway, firemen from all around the world will gather to Honor Abraham Lincoln and their fallen brothers by lighting "The Sacred Fire of Liberty" and forming a "Light Around the World".

Then each department will Sign a Helmet and send it New York as part of a "Wall of Helmets" similar to the Viet Nam Wall. Departments on The Lincoln Highway will be assigned a fallen brother and designate a Memorial Mile in their honor, followed by a candlelight vigil, striking the four fives and ringing of the Peace Bell.

It's a tall order, but I know we can do it. The Mayor of Marietta, a former fireman and the Fire Chief will "Start it Off" by sounding the alarm at 12 midnight followed Council Bluffs lighting the first fire at 12:01. Then later that night at 7:22 local time the call will go out and everyone will join in.

Hundreds of Departments have expressed a desire to participate, so it's really just a matter of "setting the spark" and "letting the fire run wild". Please contact all area departments and make sure everyone knows. You don't have to be on the Lincoln Highway, this is for Firemen everywhere.

While conditions vary, use your best judgment as to where and how big. If a parade and fire is not possible you can still tone out, sign a helmet, light a candle, strike the four fives and say the Fireman Prayer followed by Lincoln Eyes. Please contact local Media and alert them accordingly.

Have your mayors issue proclamations and pastors devote their Sunday services.

Go to the web site at [www.lincoln-highway-museum.org](http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org) for additional information on The Lincoln Highway and the 1913 Dedication and the "Light Around the World" section to download a pdf file with full details including proclamations, speeches, etc.

Feel free to call any time 24-7. The Cell Phone in the Fire Truck is 419-566-0790.

Warmest Regards,

  
Craig Harmon, Director