



Text Version of Audio Story: Hero

Heroes ... I write about my heroes a lot.

When it comes to the pages of American history, one hero stands out above the rest. His picture hangs on the wall in the studio where I do most of my writing.

If you took all of my other heroes from American history and added them up — all of them put together don't even come close.

There're a lot of reasons why he's my hero. But the biggest reason is one you'd probably never suspect ...

He was the Great Emancipator. He preserved the Union. He was a master of the English language. He was an incredible storyteller.

But none of these things were what put him over the top in my book ... hands down ... no contest. If I could travel back in time, there is nothing I would want more than to be able to sit in the same room and talk, one-on-one, for just an hour, with Abraham Lincoln.

A self-taught common man, who became a skilled lawyer without ever stepping foot in a college or law school. A man who taught himself to read and write by the glow of the fire... going on to become the man that modern historians have overwhelmingly dubbed: The all-time greatest president of the United States.

I'd love to sit and listen to the wit of Lincoln.

You know, Abraham — and by the way, he didn't like being called Abe — Abraham never drank alcohol. He was a teatotaler.

After he put General Grant in charge of the Union forces, he was more than pleased with Grant's expertise in the matters of warfare. He finally had a general who knew how to fight.

Shortly after Grant's appointment, a letter showed up at the White House. It was from an old lady who was disgusted by the amount of whiskey General Grant drank on a daily basis.

In her letter, she chastised Lincoln for allowing “*such a drunkard*” to be put in charge of the army. A reply from Lincoln hastily went back out to the old lady:

Dear Ma'am, I am in receipt of your letter and have reviewed the same. Would you be so kind as to find out and report back to me exactly what kind of whiskey Ulysses Grant has been drinking, as I would like to send the case to all my generals.

But, all of this still isn't what makes him my all-time number one hero.

The reason that Abraham Lincoln is my all-time biggest hero is because ... well ... he was homely.

It was once said of Lincoln that he was more ugly than a Missouri mule.

This man, who has had more books written about him than any other person in the history of America, and possibly the world...

This man, who was considered *the greatest president of all-time*...

This man, who was so homely that modern medical doctors were sure he must have had Elephantitis. They went as far as to study a specimen of dried blood from the night that he was assassinated, only to learn that he was not afflicted with the ailment. He was just plain unattractive.

And yet, this man, for as homely as he was, is the most loved man in American history. That's why he's my hero.

In this world, we place so much emphasis on looks ... and people complain that they can't get ahead ... because they're just not this enough, or that enough, or good looking enough, or too tall or short, or overweight or skinny.

When I hear people say that, my thoughts automatically turn to my hero.

Abraham Lincoln's real legacy is that, in this country, even the most common person can achieve great things.

Broadcasting from the Juniata Valley, I'm the American Storyteller.