

ABOUT BEARDLESS ABE & ELEAGNUS

Second Thoughts

By J. B. Leftwich, Columnist

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Every year, thousands of tourists drive thousands of miles to see the creations of one of the country's great artists.

But the name Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor who created this tourist attraction, is not a household name. Michelangelo, the sculptor who created David and Pieta and other great works, has far more name recognition than Borglum although Borglum's masterpiece is in dimensions never imagined by Michelangelo. So who is Gutzon Borglum?

Borglum is the genius who sculpted the likeness of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt into the granite of Mt. Rushmore, SD. Just imagine sculpting a face 60 feet high.

Genius in any form never fails to amaze me. I, an ordinary person with meager talents, have trouble trimming the shrubs. No matter the electric trimmers and the less than artistic demands. Just circle the plant and leave it symmetrical. Nothing fancy, rally, just trim the new growth.

My latest experience was with our eleagnus plant which, in the beginning, was a knew-high dwarf plugged neatly in a space left vacant by a dead bridal wreath. Soon, the eleagnus was crowding into the existing bridal wreaths. Not to worry, just dig up the bridal wreaths. They were old and ragged and well beyond their life expectancy, anyway.

Removal of the bridal wreath left space for the eleagnus which soon spread over the vacated area and hung over the driveway forcing my wife to circle its girth in order to park her car in its usual space.

Hence, It Was Time to Trim the Eleagnus.

Simple enough. Just circle the plant snipping away the unwanted growth. And this is what I did. Around and around, gradually reducing it to a manageable size. The operation went splendidly. I guess I felt like a surgeon who had opened his patient, removed the unwanted part, connected this to that, closed, and then moved back to admire his artistry.

I even remembered to place drop cloths to catch the clippings – which I usually think of midway through the operation.

Whoa! Wait just a minute! Something was wrong. Indeed, a lot was wrong. The eleagnus was not symmetrical at all. Viewed from the south, there was a large lower

bulge with a smaller bulge just above it. From the west, there were two protrusions, one on each side.

I walked around and around, viewing this monstrosity and trying to figure what I could do to remedy the damage I had done.

Then, it hit me!

By Jove, I thought, I had it.

This was no monstrosity. This was an artistic achievement. Hardly in the class with Gutzon Borglum, but for me a living masterpiece.

Quite unintentionally, with my electric clippers I had sculpted a likeness of Abraham Lincoln that even Old Abe and possibly Gutzon would appreciate.

“That’s Abe Lincoln,” I said to my wife lest she think it was Teddy Roosevelt.

“Who”? she asked. “Where?”

“There,” I said. “See his nose. Look at his beard.”

She was not impressed. A symmetrical eleagus would have been more to her liking.

“Shave off his beard,” she said.

Well, a beardless Abe isn’t all that bad. There are not many of them around anymore.

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