

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



Nation's only presidents museum in West Texas

United Press International
 ODESSA — Visitors to the Presidential Museum might have to pinch themselves to remember they are in West Texas rather than somewhere in Washington, D.C.
 The shrine to the nation's top executives is housed in an undistinctive brick building that formerly served as a library. Once inside the structure, guests are surrounded by the petite woman dressed in a blue and red suit.
 Some 3,500 people have visited the museum since it first opened including the late President Lyndon B. Johnson who donated his hat and some books.
 Museum records show former presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Harry Truman also donated personal items for the early exhibits.
 The current display includes a history of campaign highlights and items from every presidential cam-

paign including a picture of the winner. Popular early campaign items were bottles once filled with apple cider.
 More recent campaign items include former President Jimmy Carter's peanuts and former President Richard Nixon's pink bubblegum cigars. The museum also has a number of bumper stickers including "AuH2O-64" from Barry Goldwater's 1964 bid against then-incumbent President Johnson.
 A large section of the museum's exhibit is dedicated to the Goldie Dishong collection of First Lady dolls dressed in a replica of their inaugural ball gowns.
 Dishong of Odessa assumed the project of making both the dolls and their gowns after Texas designer John Moore, of New York City in 1965, gave the museum a doll wearing a replica of Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson's inaugural gown.

The museum also includes a wood mosaic collection of the first 34 presidents done by artist James B. Mason. He cut and positioned more than 16 million pieces of natural wood across the world in the mosaic collection.
 A Waco art dealer acquired the collection through a bank foreclosure and offered it to museum officials for \$10,000. Borrowing three pieces to show Odessans, the officials were able to raise the money within 10 days.
 The museum's library consists mainly of more than 500 autographed, rare and limited editions about the presidency that former Texas Attorney General John Ben Shepperd of Odessa donated on behalf of his family in 1965.
 England described Shepperd as a political history and science buff who wanted to share his private collection with museum visitors.

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