

## Texas Ranger Museum Receives 'Lone Ranger' Collection



Theatrical Gun belt with stamp "Clayton Moore – Lone Ranger and Prop Guns.

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By Erin Quinn Tribune-Herald staff writer  
Courtesy Waco Tribune

Dolores “D” Taylor’s lifelong obsession with “The Lone Ranger” began at 9 years old, when she was given a belt, complete with images of horses and lassos, and, of course, the masked hero and his sidekick, Tonto.

The Montana native began to collect. And collect. And collect. When she died a couple of years ago, she had about 400 pieces of “Lone Ranger” memorabilia: ornaments, View-Master reels, lunch boxes, dolls of every size and an original black mask made for Clayton Moore, the Lone Ranger himself.

Fran Striker Jr., whose father created “The Lone Ranger” character, contacted the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum to see if there was any interest in the collection. There was.

The museum plans to dedicate a new exhibit to everything “Lone Ranger.” The process of unpacking boxes of collectibles, registering them into a database and planning the exhibit, however, will take at least another year, Christina Stopka, the museum’s deputy director, said.



Christina Stopka, deputy director of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, holds up an original Lone Ranger mask worn by actor Clayton Moore. Next to her are vintage Lone Ranger dolls. (Rod Aydelotte photo)

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“The ‘Lone Ranger’ craze hit during the Depression, when people were looking for escapism,” said Stopka, who said she was a fan of the show. “It was that idea of one man standing up for many and triumphing. He didn’t have an ulterior motive for helping people.”

The adventures of the fictional Texas Ranger first aired in a radio broadcast in 1933 in Detroit, according to the Lone Ranger Fan Club Web site.

He and his faithful Indian friend, Tonto, were as moral as they came — never used excessive violence to fight injustice, never stuck around for the pat on the back, never accepted reward money.

The masked icon caught on as a movie serial in the late ’30s and as a TV series from 1949-57. Cartoons followed in the ’60s and again in the ’80s, according to the Web site. The shows have been in syndication on and off since the ’60s.

### **‘Ranger’ to return?**

Stopka said Disney producers have even been talking recently about another “Lone Ranger” movie.

“The idea of ‘The Lone Ranger’ is really a return to simpler times,” Byron Johnson, the museum’s director, said. “‘The Lone Ranger’ is an image that the baby boomers grew up with. And, it’s something that ties the generations together.”

The executor of Taylor’s estate came to Waco early this year to visit the museum and meet the staff. She decided it would be a good resting place for her friend’s 53-year compilation.

The collection was donated to the museum as a gift. Johnson declined to state the value of the collection, for security reasons.

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Next came Stopka’s visit to Montana, where she first saw the abundant collection and carefully packed each piece in protective boxes.

The items were brought back in a cargo van that Stopka borrowed from the city’s library services.

Now, gloves will be worn to remove each piece from its box to be photographed and registered in a database. The items will wait in secure storage while the exhibit is designed and planned, Stopka said.

The museum’s staff, however, is far from complaining about their year’s worth of Lone Ranger-themed workdays.

“This collection is like everyone’s Christmas present,” Johnson said.

# EXAMPLES FROM COLLECTION

## Preliminary Cataloging Photos



