

# SELECTED ACQUISITIONS

## *Building the collection*

These acquisitions are examples of the 30,663 objects that the Museum collected in fiscal year 2001.



**THOMAS W. LANGFITT**  
Board member

*"The Museum brings to life for the nation's children and youth the story of our great nation in all its glories and despairs. It translates the abstraction of the history text into something visible and palpable that remains with many of them forever."*

### **Leonard Nadel Collection**

Magazine photographer Leonard Nadel photographed Mexican farmworkers, or braceros, in central Mexico and California in the summer of 1956. An outstanding collection of his prints and negatives—the only known group of bracero images—was an important addition to the Museum's Latino holdings during fiscal 2001.

From 1942 to 1964, the bracero program brought more than 4.5 million Mexican nationals to the United States. Mexican peasants, desperate for cash



Leonard Nadel's photograph of a bracero worker in a strawberry field near Watsonville, California

work, were willing to take jobs at wages that Americans scorned. Their presence had a significant effect on the business of farming and the culture of the nation. Nadel's photographs show the recruitment of farm laborers, their processing at U.S. "reception" centers, and their working and living conditions in California. The collection was purchased by the Museum.

### **White House Press Passes**

The president of the United States is the object of intense scrutiny by the press, which plays a central role in keeping a watchful eye on presidential power. For the exhibition *The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden*, veteran reporter Helen Thomas donated several White House press passes to the Museum's political history collection.

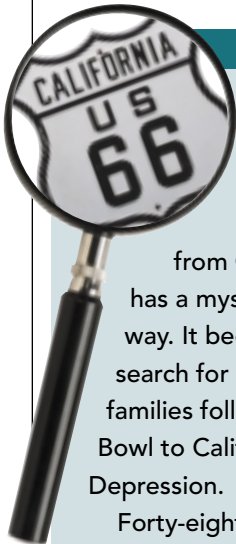
Thomas has covered every chief executive since John F. Kennedy, and for many years she asked the opening question when presidents met the press. "When you think of presidential press conferences, you think of Helen Thomas," says Harry Rubenstein, curator of political history and one of the exhibition's curators. He phoned her during his search for artifacts that symbolize the press's role, and she responded by sending the passes over to the Museum. They are on view in the Limits of Power section of the exhibition.

### Seattle Protest Costume

Artifacts used during public demonstrations help the Museum document a fundamental American freedom—the right to peaceable assembly. During demonstrations at the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, activists from the Humane Society of the United States wore sea-turtle costumes to make a statement about global environmental issues. One of the costumes is now part of the Museum's reform-movements collection.



The Humane Society was part of a large coalition of organizations concerned over the relaxation of environmental protections and human rights resulting from global trade agreements. The society donated the costume and related material to the Museum in 2001 for possible inclusion in the upcoming exhibition, *America on the Move*.



## A CLOSER LOOK

### Sections of Route 66

Historic Route 66, which stretched from Chicago to Los Angeles, has a mystique like no other highway. It became a symbol of the search for a better life after migrant families followed it from the Dust Bowl to California during the Great Depression.

Forty-eight feet of original 1932 concrete pavement from Route 66 is now part of the Museum's collection, a gift from the State of Oklahoma Department of Transportation. In November 2003, it will be part of *America on the Move*, a 26,000-square-foot permanent exhibition that includes interpretation of the lives of migrating families, truck drivers, and others who drove on the famous road, as well as the changing social and economic

patterns brought about by the construction of long-distance highways.

Acquiring the historic pavement required some complex logistics. Museum intern Kevin Schlesier located the pavement with the help of local historians who had researched Route 66 in Oklahoma. A state contractor, Plains Bridge Contracting, cut the pavement into sections and lifted them onto three flatbed trucks. Central Technology Center of Drumright, Oklahoma, a member of the Oklahoma Trucking Association, donated its services to transport the pavement slabs to Washington. The eight slabs of concrete—weighing about 9,300 pounds



FROM ABOVE RIGHT: Helen Thomas's White House press passes; sea-turtle costume from Seattle protests