



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**Presidential Places
George W. Bush Museum/Library**

Presidential Places

George Washington	Birthplace
Andrew Jackson	Home and Grave
Abraham Lincoln	Home, Museum, and Tomb
Herbert Hoover	Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave
Harry Truman	Birthplace, Home, and Museum/Library
Dwight D. Eisenhower	Childhood Home and Museum
Ronald Reagan	Museum and Grave
Richard Nixon	Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave
George H.W. Bush	Museum/Library
William Clinton	Childhood Home
William Clinton	Museum/Library
George W. Bush	Museum/Library

Reflections on Visits to Presidential Places: Government Graft

Pending:

George Washington	Mount Vernon
Thomas Jefferson	Monticello
James Madison	Montpelier

And others as I travel America

Presidential Places

Hundreds of books, movies, and television programs are available about the homes, libraries, museums, birth, and burial places of America's Presidents. I cannot hope to replicate these works, nor do I wish to. My hope is that the essays in the *Presidential Places* series offer different and humorous perspectives about several of America's revered historical places.

Many of the places we visit in this series are called *libraries*. They are unique places containing historical information about America in general and specifically about an American president during his time in office.

Here is one definition of such a library: "A repository of historical information, where many books are kept."

Here is an alternate and more accurate definition: "A repository of historical information, where many books are kept away from the public."

Here is another definition of a presidential library, "A library, whose contents are forbidden to be examined by people who paid admission to enter the library and examine its contents in the first place. Therefore, Disneyland-like exhibits are created to placate the crowd."

A fourth definition: "Thinly disguised attempt to bolster the public image of a former President."

These definitions are acceptable to those who flock to presidential places. After all, presidential places are crowded places. The visitors must be curious about White House dinner menus, presidential pins, catchy campaign slogans, first-ladies' gowns, and other artifacts of American politics. Because these places vary in how they are named, I use the words *museum* and *library* interchangeably. It appears most of the places have buildings and rooms that serve both as museums and libraries.

In each of these places I visited, I had my fill of political drivel. But of more importance, I witnessed a deep sense of pride the site creators have about these places. And time and again, I beheld the thankfulness and patriotism of American citizens who were aware, while knowing America's faults, that the country offered a better way of life than many other nations. Even with tongue in cheek, I carried away a sense of American citizens' reverence for America and for America's Presidents' contributions to this legacy.

It is my goal in *Presidential Places* to provide you with some lesser-known and humorous aspects of Americana as well as a sense of the pride and patriotism of the sites' creators and visitors.

Unless otherwise noted, the cover page depicting the face of a U.S. President is sourced from Google.

George W. Bush: Museum/Library

August 26, 2013

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Last week, I traveled to Dallas, Texas, to visit the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum. This report will be one in a series about my paying calls on presidential sites. For the past several years, I have written about these visits and sent these essays to a number of my friends and colleagues. I had forgotten I had not posted them online. So, this is my first effort to getting these reports to you through my blog.

This library is located on the Southern Methodist University campus, a fitting location, as the man is a Methodist. Nonetheless, some liberal members of the SMU community were opposed to the project. They expressed concern that the library would be a launching point for grooming young conservatives for public office. Well...yes, what else was to be expected? The William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum (Little Rock, Arkansas) received similar criticisms from the conservatives.

Be it liberal or conservative, legacy polishing and political tuning are going to take place through these libraries. Let's get used to the idea, try to put our blue or red baseball caps away on visits to these places, and simply enjoy a splendid piece of Americana. You will have fine treats awaiting you. I've been to over ten of these places and assure you they are treasures to behold.

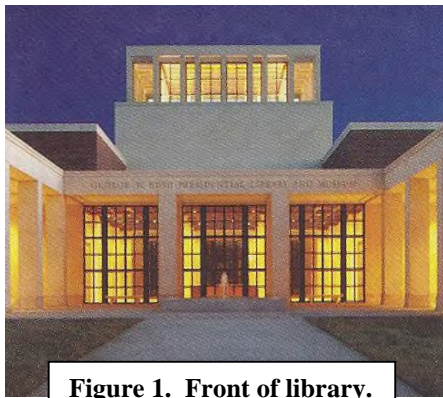


Figure 1. Front of library.

Figure 1 shows the front of the library. By day, the building is unimposing, almost bland. But as seen here, it is attractive in the evenings. I was surprised by the size of the place in relation to the relatively small amount of room that is allotted for the public to visit. Of course, the idea of these libraries is for them to store and take care of documents and artifacts collected during a presidential administration. Secondly, they act as intellectual Disneylands: No rides or cotton candy, but enough mental fodder to hold one's interest.

If you wish to bypass the museum displays and delve into the documents (numbering in hundreds of thousands), you can go through procedures to gain admittance into the archives.

The second floor shown in Figure 1 is located toward the rear of the lobby. The most impressive display (for tourists) is a video presentation played on the four walls of this floor. The animated images, some shown in Figure 2, appeared almost life-like. For example, the cowboy with a rope: I would not have been surprised if the lasso had somehow found its way around my body.

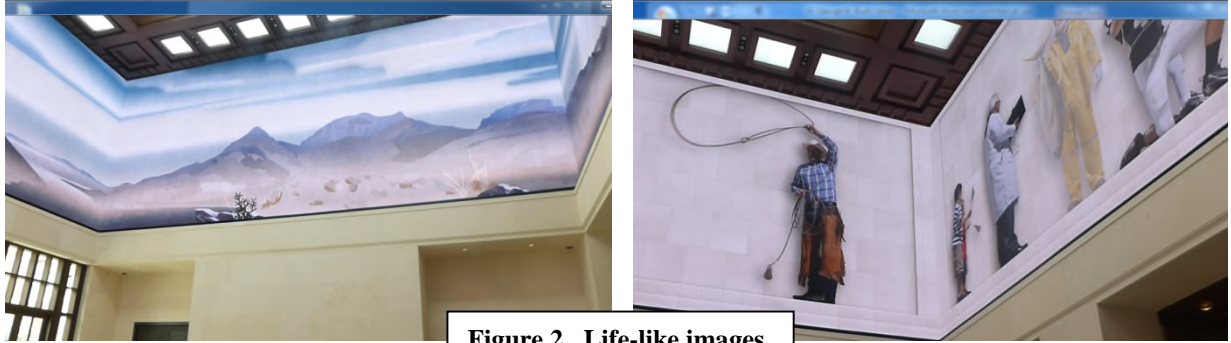


Figure 2. Life-like images.

My time was limited for this visit. Originally, I had intended for this trip to be devoted to the visit to this museum. But I later discovered the National Portrait Gallery was sponsoring an exhibit of rare Elvis Presley photos in Fort Worth, just down the road a few miles from SMU. I like George well enough. I like Elvis even more. I decided to split my time. For now, Figure 3 shows the layout of the area tourists can visit. The Bush Library entry and exit doors are adjacent to the room showing the video presentations on the walls (Figure 2).

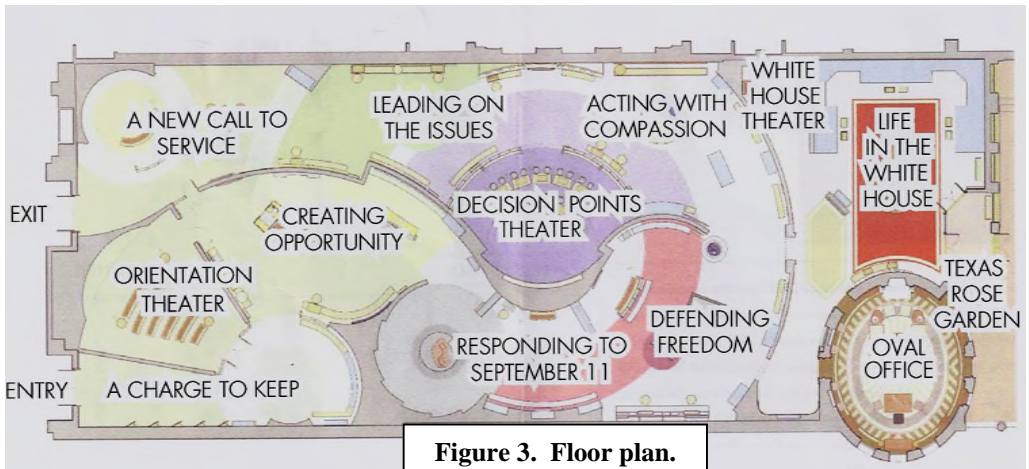


Figure 3. Floor plan.

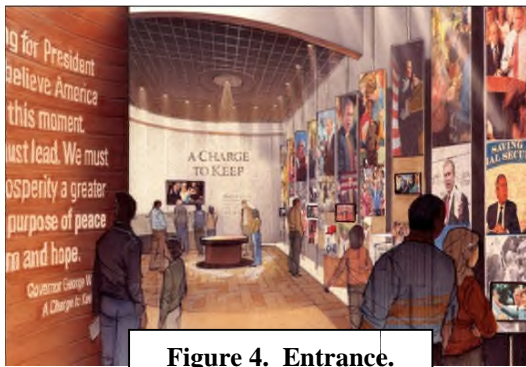


Figure 4. Entrance.

Figure 4 is an artist's rendition of the first exhibit. It is accurate, down to the pictures on the wall. Stay a while at this display. It presents an entertaining review of the president's life from his early days to his time in the White House. Then take a walk around the exhibits as shown in Figure 3. It will not take long, even if you read all the placards and signs. Like George W.'s speeches, the explanations are terse and to the point.

Flashbacks and Flashpoints

Holly and I attended the Presidential Inauguration ceremonies in Washington, D.C. in January, 2005. (The occasion for my first *Your on the Street Reporter* reports.) I was an enthusiastic participant, as I wanted Bush and the Republican Party to take control of the White House. Changes of parties in our capital discourage ossification. A couple months later, Bush gave a speech in which he said, "This is my maiden voyage. My first speech since I was the president of the United States and I couldn't think of a better place to give it than Calgary, Canada."

The liberal press had a field day with that quote, saying it was a gaffe. It was not. His referral to his maiden voyage was about being out of the country for the first time as president. He got into trouble again during the 2008 financial crisis when he stated, "I've abandoned free market principles to save the free market system." Yet, that is exactly what the administration did. My only reservation about this statement is that Wall Street no longer operates on free market principles. The Street has a backup: Uncle Sam guarantees the Street can privatize profits and socialize risks. (See my book: *The Nearly Perfect Storm: An American Financial and Social Failure*.)

He shocked his neocon supporters with this claim (July 2, 2008): "Should the Iranian regime-do they have the sovereign right to have civilian nuclear power? So, like, if I were you, that's what I'd ask me. And the answer is, yes, they do." The Israeli leaders shuttered at what was a reasonable assertion.

This is one of my favorites: "A lot of times in politics you have people look you in the eye and tell you what's not on their mind." Stupid? Not if you think Bush is capable of double entendre. I think the statement is hilarious, and indicative of what we humans often wish to hear during confrontations with others.

However, my support for this man, and especially his staff, dissipated into disdain with his decision to launch the second Iraq War. I have documented my reasons in other reports. Bush had this to say about this conflict, "There is no doubt in my mind when history was [sic] written, the final page will say: Victory was achieved by the United States of America for the good of the world." This report is in the lighter side, so I won't delve into just how wrong Mr. Bush was.



Back to the Library

I'm a forgiving sort. If angry, I go to a corner and pout a while. Then I come out, ready to engage again. With that spirit in mind, I asked a library employee to take a picture of me with the two Bush men, as seen in Figure 5. Forgiving! I'm even holding G.W.'s hand, a gesture two South westerners simply do not do. Cold hand, warm heart? George's hand was cold as bronze.

Figure 5. Cold hand, warm heart?

It was time to leave. I had an important appointment to visit an Elvis portrait show in Fort Worth. Before leaving, I used the Oval Office phone to make a call. I'm saying, "Elvis get back in the building. I'm coming over to see you!"

