



The 1968 Exhibit Podcast Transcript Minnesota Historical Society

Here at the Minnesota History Center, we're putting the finishing touches on *The 1968 Exhibit*. The show focuses on 1968 as a transformational year in popular culture, social change and politics. And while the show brings together pieces from museums and private collections around the country, many of the objects on display are drawn from the Society's own collection.

Television of 1968 is well-represented in the Society's collection. The most talked-about new series of that year – then and now – was Rowan and Martin's *Laugh-In*. The sketch comedy show embraced the counter-culture and featured a bevy of memorable catchphrases, including "Sock it to me," commemorated on this T-shirt.

On the other end of the TV spectrum was the sitcom *Family Affair*, in which Brian Keith's "Uncle Bill" raised his late brother's children, Cissy and twins Buffy and Jody. Buffy frequently was seen toting her "Mrs. Beasley" doll. Similar dolls were marketed to the public in an early example of TV tie-in merchandising.

Undoubtedly, the longest-lived and most prosperous show on the air in 1968 was Gene Roddenberry's "*Wagon Train* to the stars," *Star Trek*. Well-written, if not always well-budgeted, the original show lasted just 79 episodes, but launched five subsequent TV series, 11 feature films, and innumerable books, comics and games. Who can say how many *Star Trek* toys have been produced over the years? These disc guns surely are some of the first.

Also on TV screens was the Vietnam War, the first major conflict to play out in living rooms via the evening news. The Vietnam War is well-represented in the collection, in part by this Boonie hat and this battle helmet, both worn by a St. Paul native who served with the 82nd Airborne. Anti-war sentiment is reflected clearly in several buttons.

Other social causes of the era were closer to home. In 1968, the American Indian Movement was founded in Minneapolis to address treaty issues, poverty, poor housing, and police harassment of Minnesota's Indian communities. The organization expanded in mission and geography over the years, and continues to be active in Native American issues today.

In the world of politics in 1968, Lyndon Johnson stunned the nation when he announced that he would not seek re-election. Two Minnesotans vied to replace him, and both campaigns are well-documented in the Society's artifact collection. U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy firmly established himself as the anti-war candidate, calling for an end to American involvement in Vietnam and a quick withdrawal of all U.S. troops. McCarthy's strong showing in the New Hampshire primary was a significant factor in Johnson's decision not to run. In the end, though, McCarthy lost the nomination to fellow Minnesotan – and incumbent Vice President – Hubert Humphrey, who pulled together the necessary support from a splintered Democratic Party. Humphrey accepted the nomination at the raucous Democratic National Convention held that summer in Chicago.

You can see these objects for yourself, and relive that remarkable year, when you visit *The 1968 Exhibit* here at the Minnesota History Center. And if you don't catch it in St. Paul, you can see the show as it travels around the country. See the Society's web page for full details. I'm Matt Anderson for the Minnesota Historical Society.