

DON CHRISTMAN TOY MUSEUM AND LAKE NORDEN CITY OFFICE

The Don Christman Toy Museum and the Lake Norden City Office have been in a shared location since January 2001. Donald Christman, a retired farmer, officially donated his toy collection and Terry Redlin prints, "Best Friends" and "Harvest Moon Ball", to the City of Lake Norden on January 3, 2001. Preparations to house Christman's toys began with the purchase of the building shell and lot from J&R Distributing in January of 2000. Completion of the interior of the building was achieved in two phases during the years 2000 and 2001 by Antonen & Hanson Construction, Incorporated. Upon completion of the building's interior, the Lake Norden City Office was moved from the Lake Norden Firehall to the new location.

Donald Christman was born January 25, 1922 in Watertown, SD to Florence and Clint Christman. Christman passed away on February 10, 2004. His parents lived and farmed in rural Hazel, SD. Upon his father's death in 1945, Christman and his brother, Loren began farming together. Christman retired from farming on two different occasions. Both times, he decided he needed the challenge and activity of farming in his life. During the fall of 1990, a young man named Tony Opdahl helped with the harvest. In 1991, Loren Christman died from cancer. After his brother's death, Christman retired from farming for the third and final time. Upon Christman's retirement, Opdahl began operating and managing the Christman Farms.

Christman dedicated much of his retirement years to traveling and attending auctions, where he purchased antique toys, trains and dishes. He also collected prints by well-known artists like Terry Redlin and Rose Mary Mellet. Before Christman's retirement, he was more interested in big equipment used for real farming. "But when I turned 62, I started collecting toys at auctions and toy shows and wherever I could find them because you have to have something to do after retirement." Christman also stated that one year from Easter to Easter he "traveled 20,000 miles attending auctions to purchase collectables."

The initial collection donated by Christman to the City of Lake Norden took him seventeen years to amass. The first two collectable toys he purchased were a four row *John Deere* corn planter and an *International* combine. He began this collection in hopes that "someday the toys would be displayed in a museum for people to enjoy." The toys were primarily purchased at auctions held in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois.

The antique dish display was added to commemorate Christman's 80th birthday on January 25, 2002. An additional display case was added in November 2002. Christman donated the lighted Terry Redlin print "Purple Mountain Majesty" on February 17, 2003. Christman continued to purchase toys and add them to the museum's collection. In order to accommodate the increased number of toys, wood display cabinets were installed in the office front in June of 2003.

Christman chose Lake Norden because Mayor Larry Steffensen and the City Council welcomed the opportunity to provide a building, the Lake Norden Development Corporation donated the glass cases and because "it's so nice to have the museum close to home."