

Rotary Club tackles Bush House

*By David J. Lee
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The first project the Rotary Club took on 100 years ago was to install a public restroom. Saturday, Odessa Rotarians began the process of installing a septic system at the Bush House.

Even more Rotarians crawled over and throughout the house replacing sheet rock, sanding, scraping, caulking and preparing the little green house to be painted.

"We're devoting a lot of time and resources to restoring the Bush House," Rotary President Bill Berry said. "This is our 100th year, and we wanted to take on a big, worthwhile project this year." As the club members poured over the house Saturday, extension cords, sponges, tools, ladders, buckets and drills lay scattered through the area.

"We're not professionals — we have a supervisor," Berry said of Odessan Danny Schnaubert. Regardless, about 12 club members worked their Saturday away at the house.

Berry said the Odessa Rotary club would actually staff 12 shifts of 12 workers to restore the house — two shifts each Saturday, Aug. 21, Aug. 28, Oct. 2, Oct. 9 and Oct. 16.

"We're providing the elbow grease and the time," Berry said.

The money to restore the house comes in part from the Odessa Board of Realtors, Barbara Gladden said "This is a special project, and I'm happy, happy to have Rotary involved," she said. The restoration plan for the green two-bedroom, one-bath house is extensive. The entire interior — from floors to wallpaper to the kitchen sink — will mimic Christmas photos from the Bush's 1948 Christmas in the house.

And with about \$50,000 to work with, Gladden needed help.

That's where Rotary stepped in.

"We knew we were going to do a special project this year, but the right one hadn't come along," Berry said. "We were actually late. We wanted something that would have an impact and a benefit for our community."

And the need for a septic tank had a special meaning too. When Rotary began in Chicago in 1904, a public restroom was the first project.

"The significance wasn't lost on us," Berry said.

"Barbara Gladden sent us a proposal and wish list, and our board voted unanimously to do it," he continued.

The Rotarians will spend three Saturdays this month preparing the house for paint and painting it. In October, they'll join with the Permian Basin Master Gardeners and Keep Odessa Beautiful to landscape the land around the house.

The house has a long way to go, Gladden said, adding that opening day would be Dec. 3. And she expects it to be so well done, it'll join other nice homes in Odessa on a special list.

"We'll include it on our Christmas tour of homes," she said.

Want to help?

The Odessa Downtown Rotary Club will be working to restore the Bush House again from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday and Aug. 28, as well as the first three Saturdays of October. If you'd like to help, call 362-8943.

Don't have time to help restore the Bush House? The Odessa Board of Realtors is selling limestone pavers as a fund-raiser. A 12x12 piece runs for \$100 and a 12x24 piece is \$250. The paver can be etched with a name or saying. For information, call 362-8943.