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## Lincoln exhibit merges personal with political

By **JULIET WILLIAMS** *Associated Press Writer*

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**SACRAMENTO -- ]**

Most Americans know the outlines of Abraham Lincoln's presidency, from his struggle to hold the union together to his assassination just after the end of the Civil War.

Lesser known are aspects of his personal life and the details that informed his political thought. It's that side of the 16th president that is revealed in a new exhibit at the California Museum, "With Malice Toward None: the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibition."

The touring Library of Congress exhibit commemorates Lincoln's 200th birthday and will run through Aug. 22.

To be sure, the display contains several historically significant documents, including campaign items from a national political convention in 1860, a partially handwritten copy of the Emancipation Proclamation and Lincoln's Bible - the same one used by President Barack Obama in January.

But some of the other nearly 200 artifacts might not make it into Lincoln's official record, like a letter from his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, that offers a glimpse into a marriage strained by the demands of politics and war. Mrs. Lincoln laments not having heard from him for some time, noting, "Strangers come up from W- and tell me you are well, which satisfies me very much."

There are also the contents of the president's overstuffed pockets on the night he was gunned down at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, including two pairs of eyeglasses - one held together with a piece of twine - a \$5 bill and a pocket knife. A playbill for the evening's show also is displayed.

The exhibit includes the first photograph showing Lincoln with a beard, a fashion decision he apparently made during his presidential campaign after an 11-year-old girl from Westfield, N.Y., wrote to tell him that "growing a beard would improve his chances of winning the election."

Sacramento is the first stop outside Washington, D.C., for the exhibit. The show opens Wednesday and will move to Chicago, Indianapolis, Atlanta and Omaha, Neb., after its run ends in late August.

Many of the artifacts serve to humanize Lincoln, said museum Deputy Director Amanda Meeker. She pointed to a grammar book Lincoln used to teach himself proper English. With only a year of formal education, Lincoln went on to become a noted attorney in Springfield, Ill., and one of the nation's most gifted political orators, Meeker said.

Another book shows Lincoln's carefully compiled newspaper clippings about his famed debate with Democrat Stephen A. Douglas for a U.S. Senate seat in Illinois.

"Here he is cutting out these articles and gluing them in this book," Meeker said.

Lincoln's public acknowledgments of self doubt also reveal a simpler time in America, said first lady Maria Shriver.

She pointed to a quote on display in which Lincoln urged contemporaries not to consider him for the Republican presidential nomination: "I must in candor say, I don't think myself fit for the presidency."

"If someone were to say that today, someone would throw it back in their face every three seconds and they probably would not get past the first debate," Shriver said in an interview Tuesday before the exhibit's official opening. "While it was a trying, complicated time, it was a simpler time in many ways. You could say things like that and you could evolve and transform and grow, and I think the country's better off when leaders are allowed to do things like that."

The parallels between Lincoln's life and that of the current president have been well documented, and even used by the Obama campaign as a backdrop for his candidacy. But "With Malice Toward None" is timely also because it shows Lincoln's efforts to unite the country during a difficult and fractious time.

There also are reminders that in politics, some things are eternal.

One-time foes maneuvered their way into Lincoln's administration, children appealed to his gentler side and his family withstood attacks for their lavish lifestyle after moving to Washington. Mrs. Lincoln was criticized after it was reported she had spent \$2,000 for one gown during a time of war and sacrifice.

On display are a captivating seed pearl necklace and matching bracelets Mary Todd Lincoln purchased at Tiffany & Co.

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Phone: (209) 578-2000.