

# The Life of John Ben Shepperd

## Personal Life

John Ben Shepperd was born in Gladewater, Texas, on October 19, 1915, to Alfred Fulton Shepperd and Berthal (Phillips) Shepperd.



Shepperd graduated from the University of Texas in 1938 and received his L.L.B. from the University of Texas School of Law in 1941. While at U.T., Shepperd met Mamie Streiber of Yorktown, Texas. They married in 1938 and had four children, two sons and twin daughters.

## Early Career

Shepperd started his legal career at Kenley, Sharp and Shepperd Law Firm in Longview in 1941. In 1944, he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a private; he was discharged as a 2nd Lt. in 1946.

Shepperd returned to practicing law and also served as the publisher of the *Gladewater Tribune* in 1948-1949 and as president of the Gregg County Bar Association in 1950.

John Ben Shepperd's grandfather Ben Phillips served in the Texas House of Representatives in the 1880's and his father served as a Gregg County Commissioner. Inspired by their example of service, Shepperd became a Commissioner for Gregg County in 1946.

## Statewide Office

In 1950, at age 34, Shepperd was appointed Texas Secretary of State by Governor Allan Shivers.

In 1952, Shepperd was elected to a two-year term as Texas Attorney General; he was overwhelmingly re-elected in 1954. While serving as Attorney General, Shepperd investigated corruption in South Texas and prosecuted George B. Parr, the "Duke of Duval" County. He investigated the Veterans Land Scandal, prosecuting Commissioner Bascom Giles, and exposed a cigarette tax swindle and illegal raffles of automobiles. Shepperd successfully fought to retain state ownership of off-shore minerals in the Tidelands, the primary revenue stream for the Texas Permanent School Fund.

Shepperd was also served as president of the National Association of Attorneys General.



## Later Career

After moving to Odessa in 1957, Shepperd practiced law as part of the Shepperd and Rodman Law Firm, where his clients included W.D. Noel and his company, El Paso Products. Shepperd also served as a director of many companies including National Western Life Insurance, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, West Texas Gathering Co., Texas Commerce Bank, First State Bank of Gladewater, and Gill Savings in San Antonio.



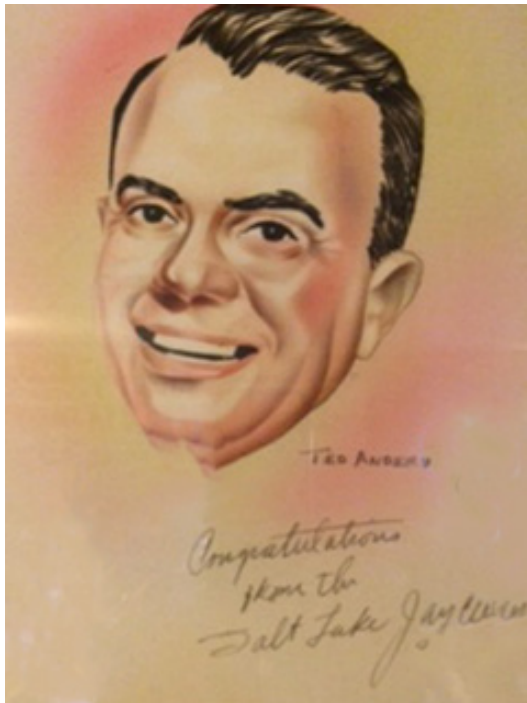
Shepperd remained active in public life after leaving office, including advising the presidential campaigns of his friend Lyndon B. Johnson.

In addition to his busy professional career, Shepperd was active in cultural programs around the community and throughout the state, leading many committees. He proposed and implemented the Texas Historical Marker Program and created Odessa's "World's Largest Jackrabbit." Today, roadside historical markers cover the state of Texas and large, colorfully painted "Jack Ben Rabbits" have become an Odessa tradition.



## Awards and Recognitions

An avid and outstanding member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees), Shepperd served as president of the United States Jaycees in 1947-1948 and was recognized as Mr. Jaycee in 1948, as a Texas Jaycees' Outstanding Young Texan for 1948, and by the United States Jaycees as one of ten Outstanding Young Men of 1949.



Shepperd also received the George Washington Award from Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, the Outstanding Texan of 1984 award from the Texas Chambers of Commerce, and the Outstanding West Texan of 1987 award from the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. In 1989, the city of Odessa renamed the John Ben Shepperd Parkway in his honor.



### U.T. Permian Basin and the John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership Institute

John Ben Shepperd was a leader of the effort to establish and maintain the University of Texas Permian Basin, culminating with the enrollment of the first thousand students in 1973. In 1985 the John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership Forum was founded in his honor by the Texas Jaycees and UTPB; in 1995, the Texas Legislature created the John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership Institute at the University to carry on the Forum and in other ways to provide leadership education for young Texans.

The John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership institute is a one small part of Shepperd's legacy of encouraging public leadership and service from Texans of all ages and walks of life. To learn more about John Ben Shepperd or the John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership Institute, visit our website at [shepperdinstitute.com](http://shepperdinstitute.com).

*who was?*

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