

CELEBRITY SHOES

For Bata, collection was a shoo-in

TORONTO (CP) — He bills himself as a TOEronto podiatrist.

And while insisting he doesn't have a foot fetish, Dr. Harvey Miltchin does have a passion for celebrity shoes, which he's been collecting for six years now.

His various boots, slippers, loafers, pumps, skates, cleats and sneakers have been worn by Elvis, Lucille Ball, Tiger Woods, Mickey Mantle, Wayne Gretzky, Marilyn Monroe, Madonna, Liz Taylor, Elton John, John Lennon, James Dean, Shania Twain, Eminem, Fred Astaire, Mickey Mantle and Muhammad Ali.

But it wasn't until last year when he met Sonja Bata, founder of the Bata Shoe Museum, that his dream came true. For the next year, Miltchin's collection will have its own display at the downtown museum under the title *Starstruck: A Celebrity Shoe Soiree*.

"I brought a sampling of what I had, this collection sitting in boxes," he says during a tour of the display. "And Bata decided they would like to showcase some of these shoes as a separate exhibit."

Bata, heir to the Bata shoe empire, scours the world for historic footwear but was apparently delighted to discover that right in Toronto Miltchin had some rare examples she herself had long been hunting down. It proved a match made in heaven.

"Bata tends to have a lot more women's shoes than men and I have a lot more men because I have a lot of the sports figures."

Neither the doctor nor the museum will provide a price-tag for their collections.

Whose shoes?

Some of the celebrity footwear on display for the next year at Toronto's Bata Shoe Museum, partly from the museum's own collection, others on loan from Dr. Hartley Miltchin, a Toronto collector and podiatrist.

■ **John Lennon:** A Beatle boot that helped launch the Mod fashion look.

■ **Marilyn Monroe:** Red stilettos designed by Beth Levine, worn in 1957.

■ **Elizabeth Taylor:** A strappy silver stiletto designed by Halston, worn in the early '80s and autographed.

■ **Lana Turner:** A rhinestone-encrusted sandal worn in the 1955 biblical film *The Prodigal*, in which she played a pagan priestess.

■ **Wayne Gretzky:** Well-worn skates from the Great One's Edmonton Oilers days and donated to a charity by his father. Gretzky signed them at his Toronto restaurant.

■ **Muhammad Ali:** The three-time heavyweight champ signed these boots using both Ali and his former name, Cassius Clay. Very rare.

■ **Madonna:** From designers Dolce & Gabbana, a platform shoe the Material Girl wore in the mid-'90s.

■ **Buddy Holly:** A well-preserved brown suede loafer worn on stage in the '50s.

■ **Tiger Woods:** With grass between the cleats, this Nike golf shoe was worn and signed in 2001.

■ **Eminem:** A stage-worn sneaker signed by Slim Shady, his "evil alter ego."

JOHN MCKAY
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TORONTO

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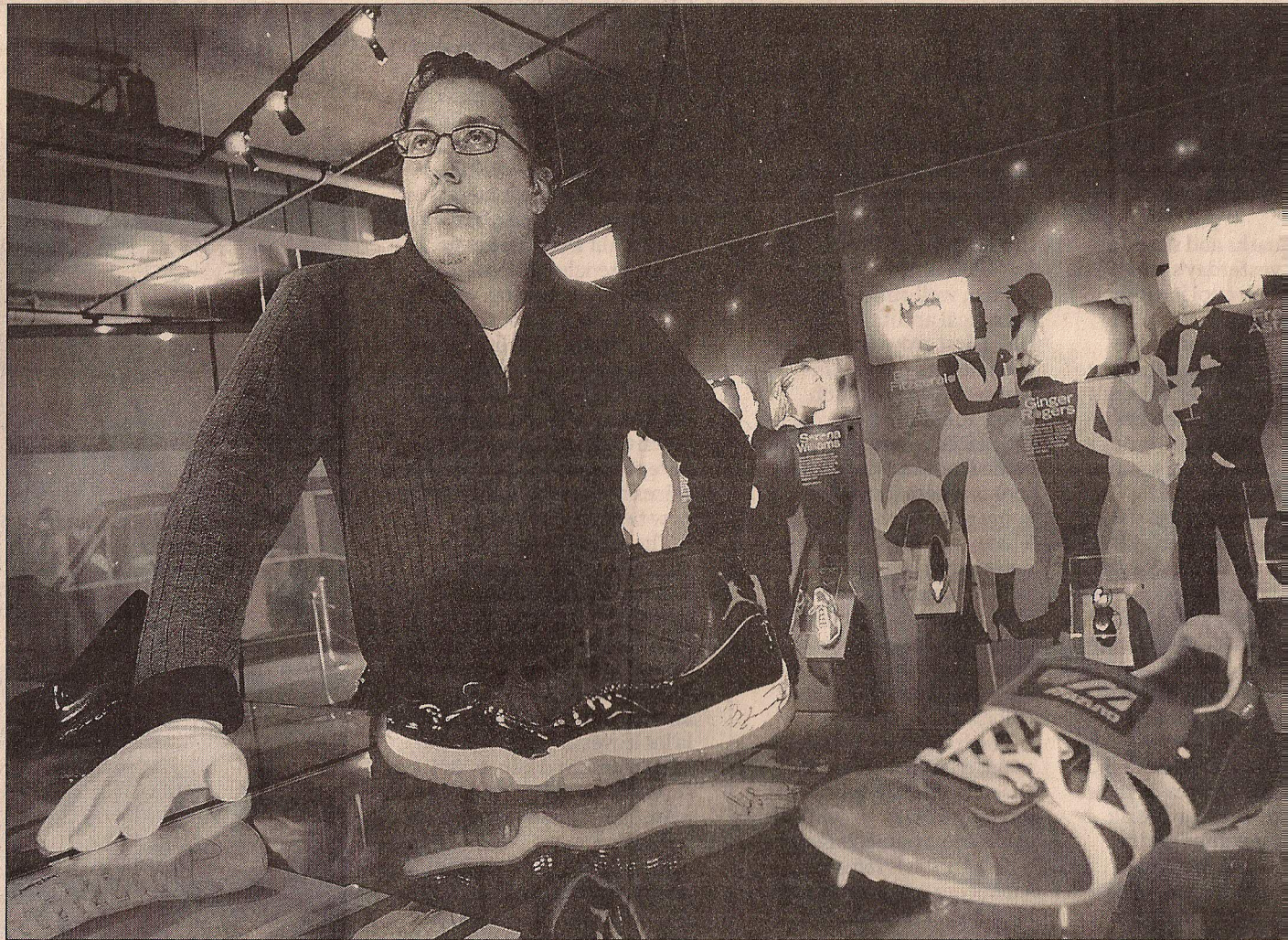
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Miltchin began his collection

Podiatrist bares his soles for footwear fanciers



Podiatrist Hartley Miltchin with some of his celebrity shoe collection, which is on display at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto. That's Michael Jordan's sneaker in the centre, while on the right is one of Pete Rose's cleats.

J.P. Moczulski, Canadian Press

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■ **Lucille Ball:** Acquired from a cameraman who worked on the old I love Lucy series, the brown stiletto is autographed by the star.

■ **James Dean:** Oxfords left at his publicist's house and never retrieved. He usually wore motorcycle boots or penny loafers.

■ **Elton John:** Platform boots made famous during his pinball wizard era in the '70s. He says he wore them shopping.

■ **Drew Barrymore:** Tiny, patent-leather Mary Janes from her days as a child actor.

■ **Dr. Hartley Miltchin:** The least famous and least valuable in the collection: one of his own shoes.

Miltchin began his collection in 1996 when, as a basketball fan, he bought a pair of Michael Jordan's sneakers.

He now has three sets of Jordan's footwear, including a pair he wore during playoffs and that have been signed by the entire Chicago Bulls team, including Dennis Rodman.

Today, Miltchin has a network of sources who scour charity auctions and tip him. He also makes extensive use of the Internet.

Unlike baseball cards and other sports paraphernalia, shoes are not a hot collectible, so prices haven't skyrocketed.

There's another difference.

While other collectors insist on pristine condition, Miltchin says, with shoes, the more worn the better.

In the corner, mounted in a

UV-safe, clear plastic display case, for example, sits a pair of black boots with cracked leather. Apparently, they were such a Presley favourite he wore them in three of his films: Spinout, Double Trouble and Frankie and Johnny.

"I got these from the Elvis estate. It took a lot of negotiation," the doctor says with obvious pride. "You can see, very, very well-worn shoes. Apparently, his favourite pair. Nice boots. Even today, they're stylish."

He stops at another case containing a set of Monroe's red high heels. As a foot doctor, Miltchin says, the wear and tear can provide him with considerable understanding about the shoes' owners.

"When I look at Marilyn's shoes, I can see she typically

put a lot more weight on the balls of her feet. She had a slight imbalance."

A result, or perhaps the cause, of her famous wiggle?

A stroll through the room confirms that both movie buffs and sports fans could have a field day.

In one case sits a massive pair of size 20s once worn by Shaquille O'Neil who, Miltchin says, now wears a 23.

Nearby, there's a bizarre pair of boots with huge, customized leather straps.

They were donated to the museum by actor Jose Ferrer, who kneeled in them, then strapped them onto his legs when he played the diminutive artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec in the original Moulin Rouge a half-century ago.

There's a pair of fancy, 19th-century high-button shoes worn by Judy Garland in the 1946 film The Harvey Girls, but, alas, no sign of the ruby-red slippers she tapped together in The Wizard of Oz.

"There are seven pairs in existence," Miltchin says, "but the original pair, the last time they sold in auction was for \$100,000 US. That's a little more than me or the museum can afford."

Miltchin concedes that he faces the dilemma of all collectors — how can you be sure they're authentic?

"You never really know. But ... I make sure my sources are as reliable as possible. And a lot of my sports stuff is forensically authenticated."

Miltchin says he doesn't try the shoes on — he handles

them with white gloves, literally — but that recently he broke his rule and slipped into a pair worn by Pierce Brosnan in the Bond film, The World Is Not Enough.

"Women didn't surround me, it just didn't do anything for me."

His wife, too, tried on Pamela Anderson's autographed mules. She couldn't walk in them.

While he recently acquired a pair of sandals worn by Charlton Heston in Ben-Hur, he still has a wish list he knows may always be just that.

"There's two pair I would love to have. One, John Kennedy. And I'd love to have the ruby slippers."

Neither the doctor nor the museum will provide a price tag for their collections.