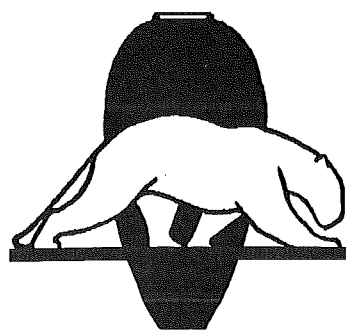


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Pot & Puma

Published by the Frankoma Family Collectors Association



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

RAY STOLL

The time for our third annual reunion, as well as the end of our second year as an official organization, is rapidly approaching. And with it will come the time for me to conclude my term as president. It has been a challenging time, as well as a satisfying one.

There have been some very bright spots—the rapid and continuous growth of our membership, and the tremendous expansion of both knowledge and interest in Frankoma as a collectible. These have come to pass through the tireless efforts of Nancy Littrell and Donna Frank in the producing of the *Pot & Puma* and the *Prairie Green Sheet*; the willingness of Joniece Frank to share her knowledge, remembrances, and thoughts with us; Phyllis and Tom Bess for their fine books that guide us in our collecting efforts; and last but not least, you the members who make all this both possible and necessary!

The dimmest moment would have to be the loss of our beloved Grace Lee this past February. The sincerity and love exhibited by her to all who were fortunate to know her will always be remembered with fondness.

As I pass my responsibilities on to my successor, I wish her/him the best of times, and I also thank the ones who helped make these first two years so successful. Pat Warner was always there when we needed him; Steve Littrell, whose business and publicity acumen have contributed so much to our success; Tom Grogg for being the sparkplug that got this whole thing started; Jim Shull for providing much-needed financial guidance; Gibb Green for being my guiding light in time of need; and Frankoma Pottery—Dick Bernstein and Kyle Costa, and all the others who have helped us. ■

FROM THE SECRETARY

DONNA FRANK

About that picture of me in the May journal—ha! Did you think I'd moved back to Palm Springs? Well, enough jokes about my irreverent imitation of a Haitian refugee!

In defense of ace photographer Phyllis Bess, *it wasn't her fault*. The blame is all mine. I brought her the wrong kind of film that day, but we took the picture anyway, hoping it would come out okay. But it didn't, and by the time we realized it was going to print as dark as it did, the boat had already left, and there wasn't time to reshoot it. I begged Nancy not to use it, but she had already formatted the whole thing and blocked the space for it.

But that's all right. You all know what I look like anyway, and the vase was the important thing. We thought surely *that* would be recognizable. Just barely, though, huh? No matter—you'll see it in my room when you visit the house in September. ■

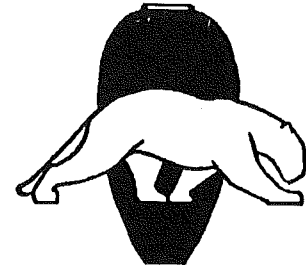
HAVE WE PLANNED

A CONVENTION

FOR YOU!!!

About the Cover Photo:

The Frankoma Grace Madonna from the Frank Family Collection. The Madonna measures 5.75" high and 4.75" wide. The glaze is ivory. The bottom of the Madonna reads: *To Grace Lee from John 1-30-41*. It is stamped Frankoma with an oval "0", and has the © F. P. 1941. On the back base of the Madonna is a large hand lettered GRACE. For more information see Joniece's Believe It or Not, Page 12. ■



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COVER PHOTO: Frank Family Collection, Sapulpa, OK.

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A Special Thanks!

The Frankoma pottery photographed in this issue of the Pot & Puma was provided by numerous members of the FFCA. We wish to extend our gratitude and thanks to these members for helping us to enrich our issue with these photos.

FROM THE HISTORIAN

MAXINE SADDLER

A hearty THANK YOU from a very appreciative member! Case in point—the *Pot & Puma*. What other hobby anywhere offers such personal, valuable, interesting information to its members? None, of course! *WE ARE SPECIAL.*

No one could impart the treasury of information our Joniece has been giving us in the *Pot & Puma*. Our duo of special sisters are something to behold. It just can't get better—but it does.

Joniece's "Believe It Or Not," along with specials like "Romancing the Buffalo" and "Angels," give us the almost-forgotten past, plus we get what's NEW in Frankoma. Aren't we the lucky ones?

Each issue of the *Pot & Puma* surpasses the one before. How can we ever show our appreciation to Joniece and Donna for their sharing? I'm sure they don't know what the history adds to each collector as they relate it to items in their own collection. They look at a certain piece, and then Joniece describes the HOW, WHEN, and often the WHY of it. Then that piece becomes so special to us. We're given the genealogy of a certain piece, making those in our own collections come alive.

In a year or two, the "Believe It Or Not" and some of those very special interviews should be made into a pamphlet or a little book. Purchasing such a little treasure would be a natural for a new Frankoma collector.

Talk about hidden talents being uncovered! Wow! They're coming out of the woodwork. Look at all those great articles being written by our president Ray Stoll, our VP Pat Warner, and trustee Gibb Green.

Ray's "Frankoma Snail Tale" brings collecting down to the level that anyone can start with. Some hobbies are out of reach for beginners to even think about. But snail vases are not so hard to find, and they're very inexpensive. With a couple of bucks one can be on the road to being a Frankomaniac like the rest of us. Once you're started, you know, there's no backing out—you're hooked!

Pat Warner shares his finds with the rest of us, and in capsule form. Colors, clays, large pieces, small pieces, etc. And Gibb digs up information that the average collector could never imagine!

His article in the last issue on "Those Wonderful Wagon Wheels" is a classic. Bet no one will ever part with any of their Wagon Wheels now!

There is a saying: "You're never dead as long as someone remembers." John and Grace Lee Frank live in our hearts and our memories. As their daughters Joniece and Donna share their lives and knowledge with us, they make us truly a *FRANKOMA FAMILY!*



Mayan-Aztec 2-Cup Teapot (#7J)

FRANKOMA MUSICAL TEAPOT

BY BECKY CARROLL—CROSBY, TX

We want to share something amusing that happened to us while we were shopping for Frankoma collectibles in Houston, Texas.

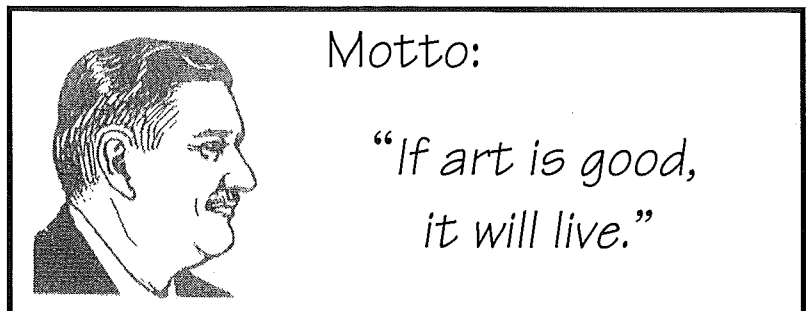
At an Antique Show and Sale, my husband Steve saw several Frankoma pieces sitting on a shelf in one of the booths. He went over and picked up a Mayan-Aztec 2 Cup Teapot (#7J) to examine it and check the price. On the price sticker was written a description. Obviously, the seller was not familiar with Frankoma, because it was described as a "Man Playing a Piano pitcher."

We politely informed the seller that this was a Frankoma Mayan-Aztec Teapot. In examining it, though, we realized that the design actually does resemble the back of a man playing a piano! Now we look for "*the man playing the piano*" on any Mayan-Aztec piece we find.

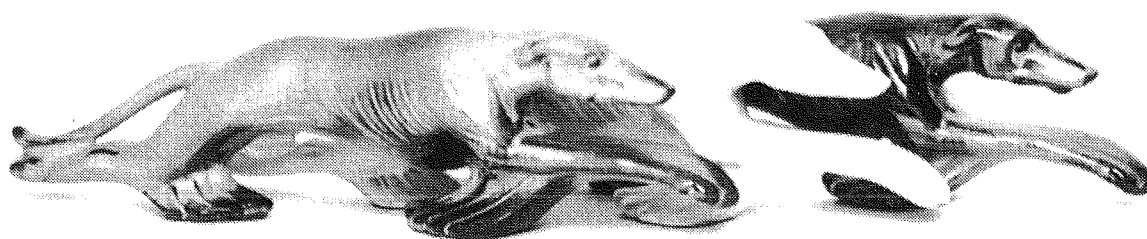
We wonder who this talented music man was. The ancient Mayan-Aztec civilization couldn't have had too many piano players in their population!

(P.S. The *Pot & Puma* and *Prairie Green Sheet* are great publications!!!)

Ed. Note: Thanks, Becky, for a great SSS! But oh, my dear—do you know what you've started? Now every novice collector in America will be running around searching for a Frankoma "musical teapot"!



Show & Tell Us



Ten Little Greyhounds

BY MAXINE SADDLER—LIMA, OH

FFCFA is still an infant. But our devoted officers have found the perfect formula for multiplying—in other words, hard work! We were creeping, now we're walking. We're so proud of the hundreds of FFCA members all over the country. We must be doing something right.

The dream of John and Grace Lee some 63 years ago—*designing and producing beautiful pottery that the average person can afford to own and enjoy*—came true. In order to preserve their works, FFCA has taken it a step farther.

All families have a way of multiplying, gathering together from time to time, writing letters, making phone calls. Now we FAX each other and have probably touched one another on the Internet. *We've come a long way, baby!*

Now John and Grace Lee have a huge *national* family that shows respect, loving care, and does everything children do to show "pride of family." Now with this heritage of ours, we treasure every piece of Frankoma. We seek it, we show it, we share our collections and knowledge with others. We find Frankoma all over these United States!

Our *Pot & Puma* is a tremendous source of history and keeps us informed in every way. We should all try to reinforce our officers with some in-put from the hinterlands. We as members all have many pieces of Frankoma. How about a "Show & Tell" from some of you "cousins" out there? Like parents, we love each and every one in our collection, but from time to time let's "Show & Tell" and do a little bragging.

Okay, I'll go first. It is difficult for me to pick out any one piece to brag about. I like to name my Frankoma pieces, usually after the person they came from.

I used to give Frankoma programs for churches and organizations. One Frankoma piece would be chosen to be the STAR for the day. That piece would wear

a silver star and tell its history, where it came from, etc. Then that piece would come home and go back on its shelf, still wearing its silver star. All the others would hear about the show, each hoping they will be the STAR next time.

My "Show & Tell" for this article—GREYHOUNDS. Not one, but ten Greyhounds. Back in 1983 at Frankoma's 50th Anniversary, the little Greyhound puppies were made special to commemorate the big affair. They were puppies from the original Greyhounds of 1969. John Frank designed the beautiful Greyhound for the Greyhound Bus Company. For 1983, Joniece did not want to change anything her father had created in 1969, but when they bring back something for the second time, something has to be changed to distinguish it from the original issue. So Joniece took one line off the base. Otherwise, these beautiful Greyhounds are as handsome as the original.

They were produced in all ten colors of 1983: Prairie Green, Desert Gold, White Sand, Onyx Black, Brown Satin, Autumn Yellow, Flame, Coffee, Wisteria and Robin Egg Blue. There were approximately 180 made. Bet you'd like to find one for *your* collection. Well, **THEY ARE OUT THERE!** I saw one at a show in Springfield, Illinois. I saw a couple of them last year right there in Sapulpa at the reunion.

The puppies are now full grown—13 years old. Gosh, that's 91 in Alpo years! I like to show off my "kennel." I have one each of all ten colors. They have a special kennel made just for them. Each has his own glass shelf.

NOW! Pick one of your special pieces and begin jotting down all the facts you know about it—where you found it, what color it is, all the history you know about it, etc. When you put down a personal history of that piece, it really makes it special. I'll bet one of our officers could add some more history to it, and it could become a full-blown article in the *Pot & Puma!* &

CONFESSIONS OF A FIRST YEAR FRANKOMA COLLECTOR

BY JAY BORCHERT—WANNASKA, MN

It has been a real on-going love affair with Frankoma. I was introduced to Frankoma way back in the late 1950s by my boss's wife who used Frankoma dinnerware in their home. I was fascinated with it then, and in 1963 I purchased our first set of dinnerware in Prairie Green for my new wife to use in our home. Thirty-three years later, we're still using it—but expanded to some 24 place settings!

It was just last year that we got serious about building a Frankoma collection. Now, you have to realize that we live in Northern Minnesota, just a few miles from Canada, not exactly prime Frankoma collecting country. One of our first purchases was made when my daughter and I went into an antique shop not far from here. The owner had five Frankoma Christmas Cards, all priced at \$40 each. Being good "bargain hunters," we huddled outside the shop and decided we would offer the lady \$100 for all of them, and that was stretching our budget. We went back in and asked her what she wanted for those Frankoma Christmas Cards. She said, "Would \$85 be too much?" Needless to say, we wrote the check out right away, and off we went, collecting more Frankoma Christmas Cards. Just one year later, I have 34 out of the 37 available. *If anyone knows the whereabouts of a 1944, 1950, and 1952, please call me!*

A few of the other prizes we have collected include one Flower Girl (#700) and two Phoebe Heads (#194), and some pieces in Ada clay. We just recently

added a Fan Dancer (#113) in Desert Gold with matching #5P platter.

One of the pitfalls of a new collector is that you want to buy everything and keep it all! We now have over 800 pieces of Frankoma in 17 different glazes. It's time to start limiting our collection to just a couple of colors, get better organized, and start selling off some of it.

Collecting Frankoma has been great fun—going to a rummage sale and finding a Christmas Card on a table for a quarter, or five little nut cups for \$1, or going into an old junk shop and finding a Prairie Green Cookie Jar for \$3—knowing also that now your kids will be giving you Frankoma for Father's Day, birthdays, Christmas, and anniversaries. It's also fun to share your collection with your friends and tell them all about Frankoma. Then they begin looking at flea markets and rummage sales, too.

It's such a great help to have the Frankoma Family Collectors Association publishing the *Pot & Puma* and the *Prairie Green Sheet*. Those articles are so wonderful and informative! I also can't say thanks enough for the wonderful help and guidance that the officers of FFCA offer, being able to write and call people like Maxine Saddler, Pat Warner, and Steve and Nancy Littrell. While never having met them in person, they're a great help in answering questions one has about Frankoma.

All in all, it's been a great year, marvelous fun. And I'm looking forward, hopefully, to getting to my first Frankoma Family reunion this fall! ☺



Jay's beautiful new lady, the #113 Fan Dancer, with #5P platter



A New kind of Artist is being Born

Turning Pictures into Pottery

BY DONNA FRANK

Take a close look at the above photo of this year's commemorative piece. Gene Gosvener, Frankoma's computer graphics artist extraordinaire, can tell you it was no simple task to accomplish. We gave him an 8 X 10 photo of John and Grace Lee Frank, which was published in the *Daily Oklahoman* almost forty years ago. When we asked permission from the Oklahoma City newspaper to use it on a "pottery trivet," the tone of their response was one of disbelief that it could be done. However, they were cooperative, and they asked that we send them one so they could see the final result. We think they'll be pleased with what has happened to that old photo.

When the idea came to us for the design, we too were a bit skeptical. We called Gene and asked if such a thing could be done. "I don't really know," he confessed, "but give me a shot at it. I'd sure like to try." It was clearly a challenge he wanted to take on. And Frankoma's president Kyle Costa agreed that, if it could be done and done well, it would certainly be a good example of Frankoma's expanding capabilities for a variety of new markets. "Let's give it a try," he said.

Frankoma has already done specials using a photo of a face on a mug, a famous race horse on a plate, and others. But none have been quite as challenging as what we were asking.

The first problem was to reduce an entirely gray-scaled image and convert it to a simple black and white one. The HDI (High Density Imaging) technique has its limitations, primarily that it works *only* in positive and negative—and when applied to this medium, that means glazed and unglazed.

The work began when it was scanned into the computer. First, the unnecessary background had to be eliminated, as it was distracting to the subject. Then, in order to convert it to positive and negative, there were countless hours of carefully adjusting and refining the picture. An infinite number of tiny lines and dots too shallow to hold the glaze in place were meticulously deleted; distorting shadows were removed; subtle lines had to be added that the camera had left out but were necessary to complete the picture (like creating the hair texture), plus hundreds of other educated decisions that went into the making of this piece. And those decisions could only be made by someone with the experience of Gene Gosvener. When it comes to translating such an image onto a ceramic surface, only Gene knows what will work, what

will not work, and which techniques work better than others, in order to produce the cleanest image possible.

The remainder of the HDI production process involves techniques that have been developed exclusively by Frankoma, and will remain a trade secret.

Not very long ago, such a feat was impossible, unheard of, undreamed of. We were curious to know how Gene came to learn this unique and specialized art of "turning pictures into pottery." He told us he knew of no one else who does this particular kind of work. From childhood, Gene always aspired to be an artist, but when he entered college his counselor persuaded him to be practical and study business. Yes, it was practical, but unfulfilling, and he never gave up hope that he would one day find a way to work in the field of art that could feed his family *and* his soul. He's happy now, becoming an accomplished artist, with a computer for a partner, for a company who knows how to use his talents.

In the beginning, Gene Gosvener had nowhere to go to learn the techniques of HDI, as no one before him had successfully mastered it. Gene learned by first believing it was possible. So for more than three years, there were many long nights and weekends of sitting at the Macintosh, learning and perfecting his

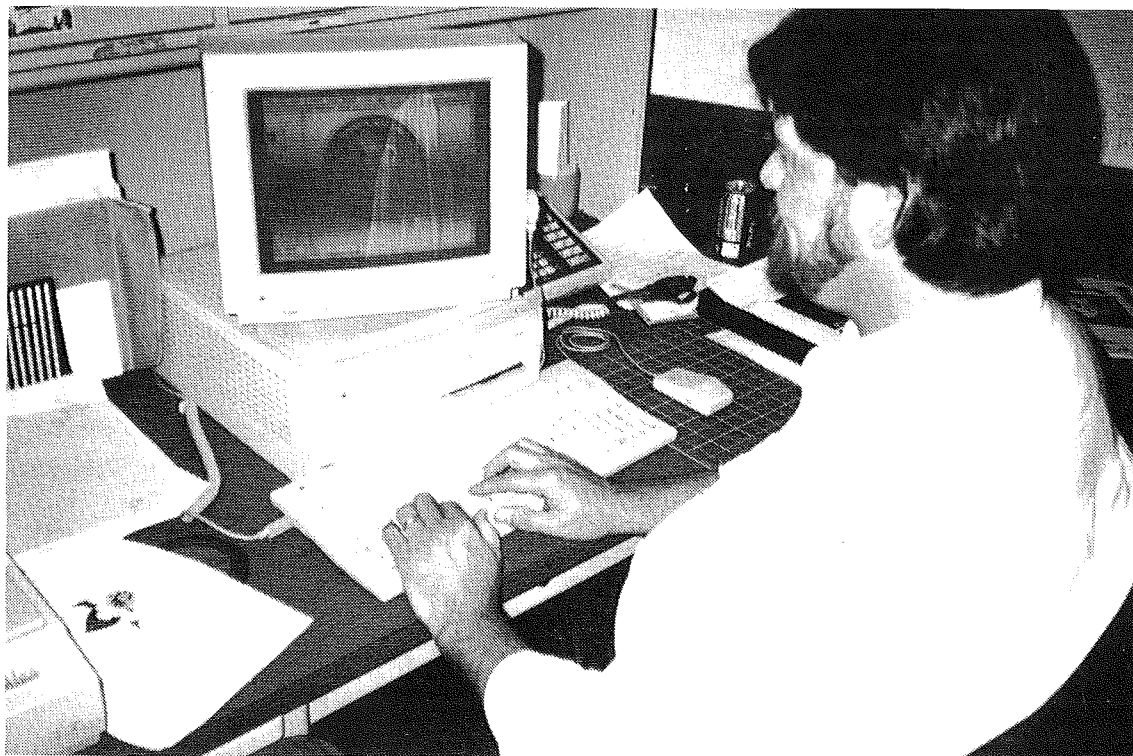
craft by using the old fashioned method of trial and error, trial and error, and more trial and error.

1996 is the reunion year for the founding partners of Frankoma Pottery. We are especially pleased that the piece designed to commemorate our Reunion 96 also marks the reunion of John and Grace Lee Frank, making it representative of Frankoma—both past and present. Available only to FFCA members, it is predicted that the annual commemorative items, especially this year's, will be very high on the collectible list in years in come.

Superb job, Gene. This fine quality product you've created for us will be treasured by collectors everywhere who appreciate and recognize you as a very special kind of artist. We thank you and Kyle for accepting our challenge, and for giving our Frankoma Family a commemorative that is unique in all the world. 🖨

Ed. Note: The 1996 FFCA Commemorative Trivet is Cobalt Blue and Terra Cotta and measures 6½" in diameter. The Pot & Puma Logo is impressed on the back.

The Photo Copyright © 1996, Oklahoma Publishing Company, from the September 9, 1996, issue of The Daily Oklahoman.



Gene Gosvener at work on the FFCA 1996 Reunion Commemorative Trivet

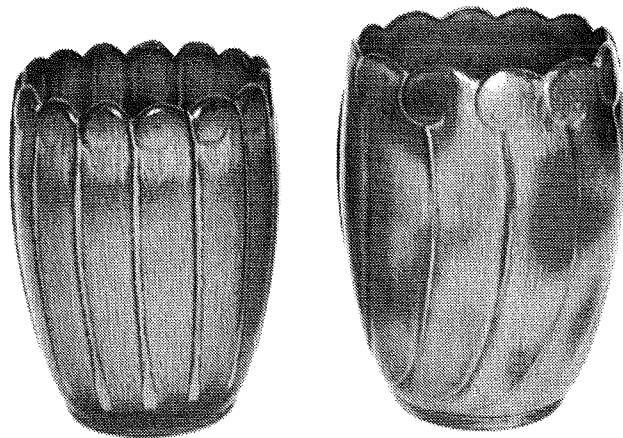
Pat Warner's Frankoma Finds

There were several unusual and very scarce vases, pitchers and jugs made during the Frankoma Era of 1934–1938, affectionately referred to as the “Norman Years.” These pieces were never to be produced again, or at least not in their original form. They were marked as follows:

1. FRANKOMA stamped in black India Ink; or
2. FRANKOMA with the small round “o” incised in the clay; or
3. The “Pot & Puma” mark, *most noted mark*; or
4. The “partial Pot & Puma” mark, *which probably had the shortest life span.*

Some of you may be asking, “What’s the partial Pot & Puma mark?” Here’s the story. John Frank was trying to coax Joe Taylor into a partnership, which would have been called “Frankaylor Potteries.” The Pot & Puma logo was designed by John Frank as an enticement to persuade Taylor to join forces with him. The pot represented John Frank, and the puma Joe Taylor. However, Taylor declined the business venture, as he was quite content teaching at the University of Oklahoma (see August 1995 issue *Pot & Puma*, Page 11).

At that point, John Frank shaved off the top 2/3” of the Pot & Puma stamp, leaving the name FRANKOMA between the two small parallel lines, and the remaining base of the pot remained below the bottom line.



*Left: #79 Scalloped Top Vase
Right: #79 Post-Fire Scalloped Top Vase*

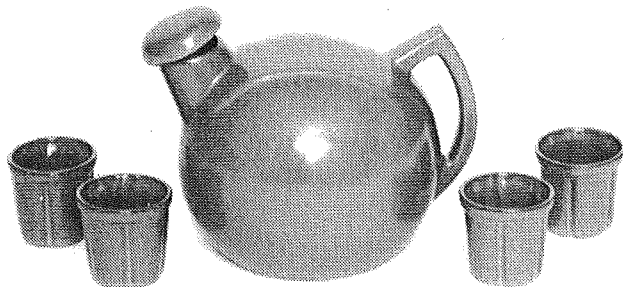
Some of my favorite pieces from this brief Norman era are as follows:

SCALLOPED TOP VASE, #79

The #79 Scalloped Top Vase by Joe Taylor is an example of the artistic workmanship of this era. This vase is very scarce and measures about 1/2” smaller than the post-fire #79 Scalloped Top Vase whose lines are straight and the scallops smoother. The original mold by Taylor was lost in the 1938 fire, and John was forced to make a new mold. But somehow it was never quite the same. The earlier #79 may ask \$200-250, and as high as \$300.

3-CUP JUG, #89

The #89 3-Cup Jug with small #86A Fruit Juice Cups or tiny Liquor Cups #89A, the latter measuring from 1-1/2” to 1-7/8”. They were made in Bronze Green (early Prairie Green), Blue-Grey Jade, and other glazes. These are seldom seen and considered very scarce—never shown in any known catalogue. If ever found, you may expect to pay \$100-150 for the Jug, and the Cups \$15-20 each, depending on color. If Bronze Green or any of the more common colors, I would estimate the lower figures, but in the more exotic colors like Blue-Grey Jade, you can expect to pay the higher figure, perhaps even more. For a com-



#89 3-Cup Jug with #89A Cups

plete set, although extremely rare, I would estimate \$250-300+, again depending on color of glaze.

BIRD HANDLED VASE, #85

The #85 Bird Handled Vase, along with its forerunner the Cockatoo Vase, were briefly made during 1935-1936. The early Cockatoo Vase had the top of the bird's plumage extended 1/4" to 3/8" above the ends of the vase. Also on the front and back side on this vase, near the bottom middle, you'll recognize a raised Deco-stylized motif often used by John Frank on many pieces during this time period. The Cockatoo Vase is highly sought and considered very scarce to rare. The later #85 Bird Handled Vase does not have the raised plumage, or the raised Deco design. The vase is smooth and plain except for the birds at each end. It is very collectable and hard to find, but much more plentiful than the earlier Cockatoo Vase. For the Bird Handled Vase, expect to pay \$125-150, and the rarer Cockatoo Vase, made only for a few months, more or less \$300.



Left: The Cockatoo Vase
Right: #85 Bird Handled Vase

TEA PITCHER, #94

The shape of the #94 Tea Pitcher is an unusual one. It looks like an old fashioned tea kettle. It came in several early colors. I have seen specimens in Blue-Grey Jade, Ivory, Bronze Green, and Cherokee Red. The #95 mug-like Cups are quite scarce. The Cups by themselves in different colors would make a nice collection. I once saw a #94 Tea Pitcher in Silver Sage that had a double Pot & Puma marking on its bottom, and its lid had a tiny Frankoma mark incised inside. *I'm pretty sure that piece was made by Frankoma!* You may expect to pay around \$125-150 for the Pitcher, and around \$20 each for the Cups.



#83 Mayan Cup, #82 Mayan Pitcher
and #84 Mayan Beer Mug

MAYAN PITCHER, #82

The #82 Mayan Pitcher is similar to the later one, but with a distinctive over-sized handle. It was accompanied by the #83 Mayan Cups, about 5-3/4" high, and the #84 Mayan Beer Mugs. This #82 Mayan Pitcher and the #83 Mayan Cups were forerunners of the Mayan-Aztec #7-series dinnerware of later years. All three have large heavy handles about 50% thicker than the later ones. Most have a small round "o" or the Pot & Puma marks. The later #7-series are quite common, but the early Mayan pieces are very scarce. This earlier Mayan Pitcher could ask \$100-150, and the Cups-\$35-50 each. The Beer Mugs could bring \$75-85, considering their extreme scarcity.



#94 Tea Pitcher with #95 Cups

Please keep in mind that the estimated values are *only my own*, based on what I've either seen or paid for these items, and not meant to be in contradiction to any other published list or lists. I hope this will help you identify some of these pieces, if you should be lucky enough to run across one. Happy Hunting! ©

Singing Those Frankoma Blues...

BY GIBB GREEN—WINDSOR, CO



*"Blue, blue, my world is blue.
Blue is my world, now that I'm without you."*

That's a lyric many of us sang and hummed back in the 1960s (if you're that old). Of course, that old Bobby Vinton song was about *lost* love. Today, I'm talking about *found* love—my great love for the blue glazes of Frankoma Pottery. To best wade through this article, you'll need your copy of Phyllis Bess's *FRANKOMA AND OTHER OKLAHOMA POTTERIES* on your lap.

Let's get rid of all the prejudices right up front. My two favorites (and the dearest ones for my Dearest as well) are Indian Blue (same as Peacock Blue), produced from approximately 1942 to 1950, and Woodland Moss, the great rutile color used from 1960 to 1974.

Our Indian Blue collection is quite limited. That color is a tough find. We're most fortunate to have *four* pieces in full bloom on our piano in the living room. They are the 3-3/4" #6 Small Round Jar of 1942, the 5" #64 Oriental Pillow Vase of 1942, the #54 Chambered Nautilus Vase, and the 9-1/2" #57 Cornucopia. We also have a few miniature vases, pitchers, and salt and peppers. Indian Blue is a two-tone speckled glaze that allows the clay to show through a little. The speckle clusters are almost turquoise.

I prefer the "Indian Blue" name over the later "Peacock," because the former is symbolic of the Native American heaven. I realize it may not seem politically correct, but how can any name be pejorative that puts a positive spiritual spin on our Native American brethren? Besides, I'm 1/32nd Indian anyhow!

Ah, Woodland Moss! Since 1968, it has been our humble home dinnerware color. We have enjoyed many, many pieces in the Westwind, Plainsman, and Mayan Aztec patterns. You have a real choice when you dine at our house, not to mention a set of Prairie Green Wagon Wheels! Of course, we prefer the pre-

1970 Woodland Moss glaze, and too, Woodland Moss blooms best on the reddest clay.

Blue began in the world of Frankoma back in the Frank Potteries era, circa 1933. In a list of glazes, in Mr. Frank's own hand on the back of an early salesman's promotion piece, he lists a "___ Blue." John Frank didn't know what to call it either! I have seen two pieces of Frank Potteries in blue. Both are a semi-matte color halfway between Clay Blue and Royal Blue. The color is pictured on Page 12 of Phyllis Bess's latest book ("Low, Round, Ringed Bowl").

There are three (in my opinion) blues of the Norman era of Frankoma. The Norman era ended when the Franks moved the plant to Sapulpa from Norman in February of 1938. They include Royal Blue, Blue Gray Jade, and Pompeian Bronze.

Royal Blue was produced from 1934 to 1942. It is a deep, rich, solid blue, as the name implies. Pieces are quite easily found in this glaze and, of course, they're all Ada clay. Blue Gray Jade is very hard to find, and very hard to describe. It is a heavy gray, semi-matte, with hints of blue and green. It changes from blue to green, depending upon the source and quantity of light it's under. My opinion is that it is basically a blue. I have only two pieces, and they cost me an arm and a leg. One is the unnumbered, small, bulbous vase of 1934-35, and the other is a #550 Mini Guernsey Pitcher with a small round "o" mark (1934-35). It is a wonderful rich color, and was produced only from 1933 to 1942.

Time for Old GG to get into hot water. Most experts question whether Pompeian Bronze is even a blue. On our most recent trip to Oklahoma, Helpmate and I were privileged to view a couple of private collections with many old-time pieces. Mrs. Bess is of the opinion that Blue Gray Jade is the base color of Pompeian Bronze. No question about it. We saw five pieces on that trip, and all had a strong showing of the tones of Blue Gray Jade. Beyond the BGJ in the Pompeian Bronze is the rutile effect. There are several shades of deep brown/golden bronze mixed in.

Joniece Frank believes that Pompeian Bronze is one of her mother and father's earliest attempts at the rutile glazes. Could well be. On Page 16 of Mrs. Bess's second book is a photo of a Prancing Colt in the

lower right hand corner. I realize it is supposed to be Prairie Green, but the color work of the print job is poor. That resultant blue-ish cast is close to Blue Gray Jade, and with a few more deep browns, it could be Pompeian Bronze.

A new blue arrived in 1942. It is a one-year wonder called Sky Blue. It is usually quite shiny and similar to a modern "baby blue." It is rich and opaque. Several pieces of 1942 manufacture continue to show up that are what many of us call "Early Blue." It is similar to Mr. Frank's early vase in the upper left hand corner of Page 12 of Bess's second book. It is quite light and allows the clay to show through (translucent). I have a pair of Bull Salt and Peppers in this color. I have also seen a miniature Indian Mask in the same color with a 1942 mark.

Since I already discussed Indian Blue, I'll move on to the stickiest wicket of all among the blues—Turquoise. First, I believe there are two shades. There is a rich, opaque blue-green, similar to the stone used in Indian jewelry, and a weaker, translucent color. The deeper color was produced in 1942, briefly in the late 1940's, and also on the red Sapulpa clay, circa 1956-57. The translucent color probably was produced from the mid-1940s to the early 1950s.

These conclusions on Turquoise are mine, based on extensive research in my own miniatures collection, as well as careful study of a couple of other large, private collections. Of course, the published books on Frankoma don't agree with my conclusions, but I think I'm pretty close to right. I have enough pieces together in one place to do this kind of a study accurately.

1953 brought in another very pleasing blue. Clay Blue, which was produced until 1961, is a light, soft, satiny, opaque blue. Of course, it was produced on both Ada clay and the red Sapulpa clay. I have personally seen many more pieces in Ada clay. There are a good number of miniatures and flower bowls and vases, but not much else.

I'll discuss the post-1970 blues in a future article.

Now for a little advertising. You'll have the opportunity to see all these glazes in person and chew out Old GG for his wacky observations. I'll be at the Big Reunion in September, in the flesh, ready to take a whuppin'. I'm hosting a glaze seminar on Friday and Saturday. We'll have samples of all known pre-1970 colors, and we encourage you to bring pieces you have questions about (or bring a photo).

Don't hesitate to call me or write if you have questions or need expert (?) advice. I relish every call and carefully answer every letter. I welcome your feedback on my articles!

See you in September—or in my next article.

(Gibb Green's address is 225 Cherry Court, Windsor, CO 80550. His phone is 970-686-2752.)

NO HELP FROM A SLIMY LITTLE FROG

A Frankoma Collecting Story

BY PAT ESLICK—SILOAM SPRINGS, AR

We have been Frankoma collectors for thirty years.

It all began in 1966. We were living in Arizona, and our five year old son had been killed in a tragic accident. My husband's family in Arkansas was unable to attend the funeral, so soon afterward, we took a trip to Arkansas with our three year old son to spend some time with them.

One day we left our little boy with his grandparents and went to Noel, Missouri, just to "get away for the night." The next morning we had breakfast in a little cafe in Noel. There was a gift shop next door, and displayed there were the most beautiful dishes we had ever seen—Oklahoma Plainsman in Woodland Moss, Desert Gold, Prairie Green, and Brown Satin!

Of course we fell in love with the Woodland Moss, and bought two 16-piece starter sets for \$15 each, a 3-quart pitcher, and eight 16-oz. mugs, all in that beautiful rich Woodland Moss.

Soon after we arrived back home in Arizona, a visiting relative accidentally broke three pieces of it—a cup and two mugs. We were heartbroken, of course, but planned to replace them one day.

We moved to Arkansas in 1969 and were busy raising our family and making a new start in another state. By the time we finally got to Sapulpa to replace our broken pieces, we learned that Woodland Moss had been discontinued. This was in the early 1980s. Flea markets and antique malls had become popular, and we began looking for our missing pieces.

We have collected a lot of Frankoma and have replaced our cup and mugs several times over. I'll never forget when we found our two mugs. In fact, there were three of them, and we bought all three.

I feel very much like the Princess in Donna's short short story—"a complete service for twelve of Woodland Moss Plainsman (pre-1970)"—ranks right up there with silver, gold, and precious jewels! But we didn't get ours from a slimy little frog.



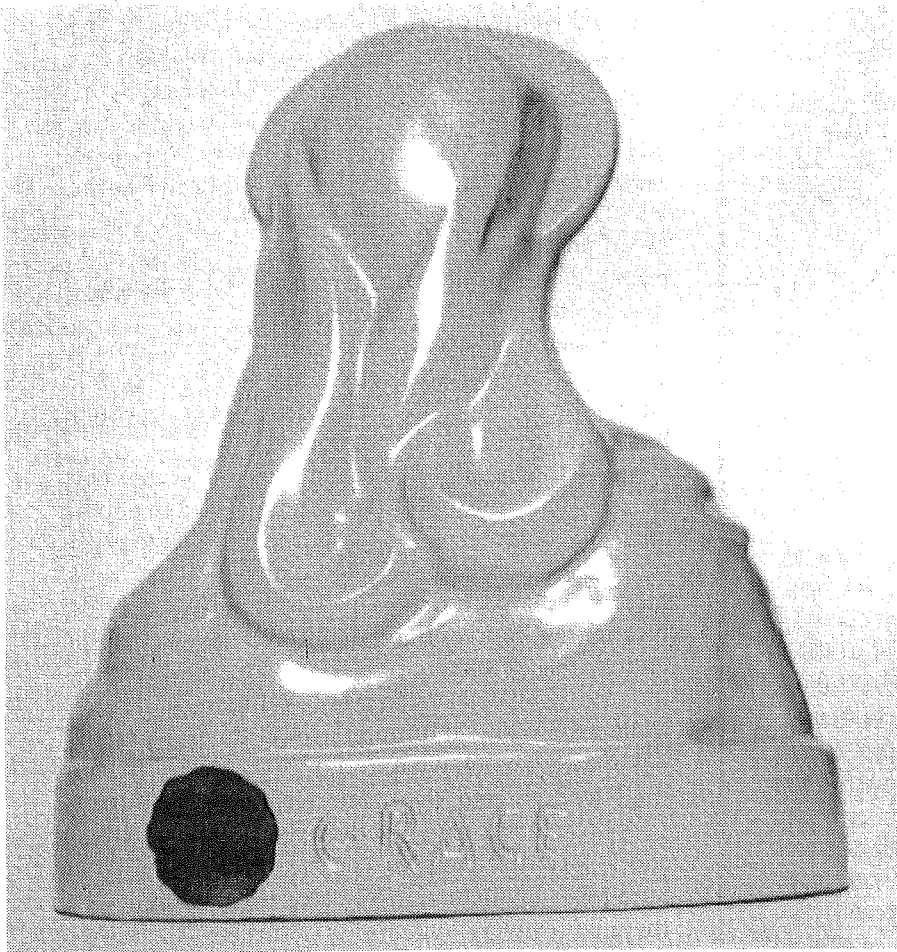
Ed. Note: No, Princess Pat, but your handsome Prince Roy sure came through for you. So who needs frogs!?!

Joniece's



Joniece tells the stories . . .

Donna writes them down



Frankoma Grace Madonna Back, circa 1941

In our on-going search through closets and storage areas, Donna and I ran across what we thought was the Gracetone Grace Madonna (#231). But like all good potters and pottery collectors, we turned it over. It says: "To Grace Lee from John 1-30-41." (The 13th anniversary of their first meeting.) It's also stamped "Frankoma" with an oval "O", and it has the copyright "©", with "F.P. 1941." On the lower back of the piece in large hand-printed letters is...

GRACE

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

THE GRACE MADONNA

This madonna is pictured only in the 1942 Frankoma catalog. But the stock number is “whited” out, and there’s no number or description of it on the page below. Nothing.

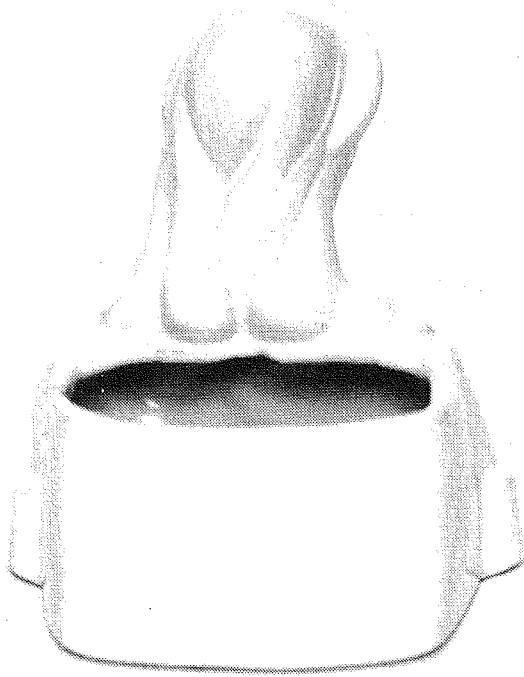
This tells me that, once again, with all good intentions of putting the piece in line, Daddy took a picture of it, put it in the catalog, but never got it into the Frankoma production line. We believe that the piece we found tucked away must be the one in the photo, and it must have had a very limited run, as it doesn’t appear in any following catalogs. I’ve heard of only two or three collectors who own this particular madonna with a “Frankoma” mark on it, so they could have been test pieces. However, it was produced by Gracetone. I had previously mentioned to Steve and Nancy Littrell that I was sure I had reworked that madonna when it was in Gracetone. But did I just dream it? Had I planned to do it but never gotten around to it? I thought I actually did, but I had no sample to back me up at the time I said it. Now I do.

Daddy had assigned me to remake and/or redesign many of the Synar molds for the Gracetone line. One of my tasks was to make a planter out of this madonna. I was not aware at that time that this was originally a very old Frankoma piece, circa 1941. I assumed it was the common Synar madonna, much like the other Synar madonna, which has been reproduced by many people in several sizes—a common commercial “hobby mold.”

A couple of years ago, Mother told Nancy and Steve that she had sculpted the original. Mother was not very well at the time and I seriously question if her talents had been developed to that advanced level in 1941. However, if you’d like to do your own speculating on this, look at her 1985 Christmas card, and you can certainly see the resemblance. There’s no doubt that if in fact she did not model it entirely, she could have had an influence in its design. (See May 1996 issue, Pages 17–19 about Mother and Dad’s communication on Lazybones.)



*Top: Gracetone Grace Madonna, #231
Bottom: Gracetone Grace Madonna Planter, #231B*



Gracetone Grace Madonna Planter, #231B

Back to the mold department. With new-found confidence in my "artistic judgment" (inflated as it was, fresh out of Joe Taylor's Art Awareness and Sculpture classes), I looked at this madonna and decided that its left shoulder was entirely too low and unnatural. To my mind, it was certainly in need of some "Joniece Frank touches of improvement."

Only tonight, as I'm writing this, when Donna was rummaging around in another obscure cabinet, did the proof turn up! There she was, in all her glory—the Gracetone madonna, with what I believed to be a *normal* left shoulder, shorter hair, and in this case a planter, #231B. It does confirm that what I thought I had done I really did—no longer a figment of my imagination, or fantasies from the Twilight Zone. For me, this was a truly great find!

As I sit here studying her more closely, I see something else I thought at the time I had improved about her, although not necessarily an "improvement." Her neck had always bothered me, so I changed the drape on her shoulder to make her neck appear not quite so long. Also, as I recall, I changed her mouth just ever so slightly. But again, did I, or did I only think about doing it? I don't know if in fact I did change her mouth, or if the piece we have here is merely glazed heavily—or if it was just cast from an old mold. Just for my own curiosity, if someone out there has a good sharp one, drop me a note and tell me what you think.

When someone takes a piece of sculpture and changes its purpose from a piece of sculpture that's complete in itself to (in this case) a planter, some

changes must inevitably be made. The changes may be positive, or negative, or neither. Here, the nice lines of the free-flowing hair on her back had to be shortened to shoulder-length. Otherwise, her hair would be in the dirt.

All this leads to a good point I've been wanting to talk to you about. Ready to add another tidbit to your ceramic education?

WEAR AND TEAR ON VALUES

FYI—slip (liquid clay) works just like water running over a rock. In time, the rock will wear smooth. Very simply, when slip is poured into a mold time after time, with each cast a little bit of the detail in the mold is worn away.

When you're getting into the really fine aspects of collecting, it's important for you serious collectors to look for sharpness of detail. The lack of well-defined detail over the whole piece—not just in spots—can be a result of (1) heavy glaze, (2) cast from a mold that's just about worn out and ready to be retired to Mold Heaven, or (3) a case of over-trimming and over-sponging. This is why a "#1" or a "first impression" or "first cast" is important and more valuable. There will never ever again be the detail like that first cast.

At this point in your learning about molds and dividing lines, you should start becoming aware of where those dividing lines are on a finished piece. If the dividing line leaps out at you, often caused by a flat knife trimming a round surface, then not being sponged properly, it should be obvious to the eye. Sometimes you'll see where the knife skidded or grabbed the surface when the seam was removed. And that's what we mean by sloppy or careless over-trimming and over-sponging. On a well finished piece, dividing lines should have disappeared.

You collectors need to know these little bits of information if you're to be the world's best educated collectors—as we brag that you're becoming! This is more of the "education" we're trying to offer you. And of course it's not just about Frankoma, but about all potteries. I'm sure that most of you collect more than just Frankoma. So when you pick up a piece of Roseville, Howard Pierce, Wedgwood, or whatever, the same principles of mold wear, trimming and finishing techniques, and glazing and firing techniques affect the end result—and will ultimately affect their values as years go by. Instead of only looking for a possible chip—which with modern technology may be so well patched it can easily fool the best of us—you can look for these other little telltale qualities that can *not* be altered. Although sometimes minute, they're nevertheless important.

The reason I want to mention this is that, knowing these things, you can find the better bargains. To the seller, it may be just one of many, and he'll offer it for a bargain price—or it may be overpriced. But now you can look at it and tell if it came from a new or worn mold, and whether or not it was finished well or badly, etc. You may pass it up, because at any price, it's no bargain. On the other hand, it may be the best bargain of your day.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Okay, on to the next subject. I often hear, "Why didn't Frankoma make more animal planters?" Very simply, Mother and Daddy, especially Mother, always said she didn't like to see flowers growing out of the backs of animals. Well, she may have had a point there, because the animal should be complete by itself, as the Creator so made him, without having to stick a posy in his spine.

The other day I picked up that little black #392 dog planter, which I bought from Tom Grogg when he still had the mall. A friend had given me a cactus plant, and I used the dog for its new home. But an hour later, I realized that every time I walked by it something in my head went tilt. It simply didn't work, it bothered me, and I ended up putting the cactus in a plain round pot that was made to hold growing things.

Now, I'm not saying that some people have not been successful in creating little vases out of baby carriages, old cars, pigs, bunny rabbits, and so on. But Frankoma was, by definition, and by its very nature, a

true art pottery. We always maintained that, in designing a piece, be it a vase or pitcher or sculpture, it should be complete in and of itself—without asking it to double as something that's against its nature to be. The container should enhance the fruit—not the other way around.

Think about it. What would you think of us if we had decided to grow ivy out of the back of that classic Pacing Puma? *Ouch!* There are sculptures, and there are cute little planters. Both have a place in our lives.

Now for the exceptions you're probably ready to throw at me. The little pig (#391) and the little elephant (#390) and the little turtle (#396) have different types of backs. The turtle planter has that shell on it—but to my way of thinking, it still looks better in your bathroom with cotton balls in it than a plant. The pig and the elephant are carrying something on their backs, so they can more logically hold something that grows. You call it. I put pencils in my pig, and he seems quite happy and content with his calling. Another one holds my paint brushes. "Yes, there was a little owl (#394), but owls are birds not animals, and we'll talk about him and others later.

Notice that these three items, along with the dog, are all 3" deep. If not exactly, they're very close to it. (I mention this for you sticklers out there—and you know who you are—who measure your pieces by the eighths and sixteenths of an inch!) But I'll bet you don't know why they're all 3" deep. I'll tell you. At every sales meeting I ever held, my ace Frankoma salesman Chester Graham, and Ike Watt and Sherwood Emery, all told me repeatedly that the florists wanted 3" of dirt to plant in, or the plants wouldn't live.

Now, be assured that whenever Chester Graham said anything, I always listened up, because he was never wrong. When Ike Watt, whose business was 95% florists, said 3", I also listened. (W.I. "Ike" Watt became our Ohio salesman after his Watt Pottery in



Little Elephant Planter (#390), Little Turtle Planter (#396), and Little Pig Planter (#391)

Ohio burned in 1965. I understand it is now collectible.) Sherwood Emery was from Louisiana. He seldom said much, or very often, but when he finally got it said in that droll Southern drawl, it definitely meant something, and I listened. When all three said make animal planters, and make them 3" deep, I listened and obeyed. That's the reason for those animal planters, and why they're all 3" deep. And those guys went out and sold lots and lots of turtles and pigs and elephants to lots and lots of florists! But the pieces never had the appeal of the hand-painted ones, nor did they have the price point of imports.

So those are some of the whys that Frankoma never did more animals with holes in their backs. Those were enough. But there's also another reason. We never hand painted our pottery. Now, when I say that, forget the Frankoma Kids and those few "employee playthings" that surface now and then. To be more specific, we didn't put little smiles and eyelashes and blue eyes on things to make them sweet and cutesy. With the exception of the Flame glaze that had to be twice-fired, we used a one-fire process, and our glazes ran. Our particular glazes were not developed to be painted with a brush, but to be sprayed with a spray gun. It's what made our glazes do what they did, and what made them unique.

It's like ordinary paint—you buy it in different formulas, depending upon whether you're going to spray it from a can or use a brush for the heavy latex stuff. When you get into fine-brush painting of facial features and little floral things, you can get into two, three, sometimes even more firings. There are cases where something has to be fired again every time a different color is applied. Like those fine exquisite china and porcelain figures with the tiny-detailed features. We can all appreciate their beauty. But that was just not Frankoma.

However, with the experiments in new glazes and new techniques that Kyle Costa and Charles Taylor are now developing at Frankoma, it could very well be that, in their future, some very interesting character pieces will evolve. And my artistic pursuits toward "clever," rather than "cute," may surprise us all.

If you want to learn more about the differences in high decorative glazes versus sprayed art glazes, just call for directions to your local library.

Let me remind you here that I am not by any stretch of the imagination a ceramic engineer. Daddy was. He had no degree in it, but he had that valuable, can't-learn-from-a-book, experiential knowledge. So when I offer broad, over-simplified examples like "water over rocks" and "different paint formulas," I don't mean to insult your intelligence or talk down to you like children. We lay people have to deal in basics. In order to explain something, I have to tell you in the way I understand it, and sometimes my understanding is pretty simple.

TOBY OR NOT TOBY

Speaking of decorative items, Daddy always had a fascination and love for Toby mugs. He always talked of doing Toby mugs, much like he always talked about doing a vitrified, red-firing, very thin stoneware (see February 1996 issue, Page 16). But neither one of these things were in reality compatible with the character of Frankoma clay or style. However, as usual, that didn't stop him, especially after I came into the designing picture and he had someone to point at and say, "Do this!"

Now, to me, Toby mugs meant those English, wonderfully hand-decorated, white porcelain and china character faces in the shape of a mug. I confess there have been times in my career that I merely assumed what I knew about something was correct, or that what I knew was all there was to know about it, and I would go forward accordingly, postponing my research (if ever) until after the work was finished. *After all, I am my father's daughter.*

You may like to know, which I've learned since, that it was originally called a "Toby jug," named for Toby Philpot, a notorious Irish drinker in a song written way back in 1761. The jug was shaped like a seated person. Most Toby jugs were made from 1776 to 1825.

The Kelly Dental Lab in Tulsa was a very reputable company that did dental appliances and crowns and such things for dentists. They asked us to do an Irishman mug as a promotional Christmas gift. Daddy took the order and handed it to me. *Déjà vu.* Well, I was a little hesitant, but it really didn't scare me all that much. After all, I thought, an Irishman—be it leprechaun or any other representation of "Irish,"—is always a smiling jolly person. And jolly usually means a bit on the chubby side. Daddy used to say, "Look at this waistline! But I'll bet you never met a man my size that wasn't a happy man!"

So, here we go again. I know you've all heard this before. This mug had to be designed to come off a 3-piece mold—two halves and a bottom. Start with the face, then the collar around his neck. Can't go down too small or it'll be tippy; can't go too broad or it'll look too heavy on the table; and it should hold a cup or more of liquid. The brim of the hat was going to be a problem because it had to stick out in mid air, and it could be too thin for casting. And then came the shamrock on his hat. A shamrock looks just like a four-leaf clover, doesn't it? I can do that.

Strange, but I've always had a hard time getting collars and necks to pull off a two-halved mold. But I did manage to come up with this Irishman Toby mug. And gosh, I was proud of him. I loved him! When the Kelly Dental Lab people saw it, they said, "Yuk! That's not what we wanted!" We said, "Well, what *did* you want?" "Not this," they replied. "We wanted

a leprechaun. Or a real Irishman. And a real shamrock—not a four-leaf clover!” So they didn’t buy them. I bombed. I cannot remember how many were made, but there were some produced with “Kelly Dental Lab” on the bottom and 1970 on the back of the collar, in green of course. I can’t say for sure how many. Anyway, we had to give their design fee/mold charge back. So that’s what happened.

I set the plaster model and a sample of my Irishman mug on a shelf in my studio. People who saw it were always saying, “What is that?” And “Why don’t you make it?” So it was being admired by many, but rejected by me because of the failure it represented.

Well, the 1976 Bicentennial was coming up, and I thought it would be a good idea to do an Uncle Sam Toby Mug. Unfortunately, with this one, the goatee was the only resemblance it had to the Uncle Sam we’ve come to know. The main problem was that I liked happy faces. Mother told me that, when I was a wee child, all the stick people I drew had big round heads with great big smiles.

Donna and I recently went to Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa to see a fabulous exhibit of some 76 works of sculptor Gerald Balciar. From his 18-foot high, white marble “Canyon Princess” (mountain lion) at the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, to his small bronze water creatures, he skillfully gets into each of his animals an astounding alertness, which brings a delightful “spiritedness” to their personalities. And he accomplishes this with the positioning of the head and a skillful subtlety in the way he does their mouths. Now, we’re told that animals don’t really smile, but his animals all have that look of contentment that sug-

gests a smile. There’s no doubt about it—his animals are happy animals! You just can’t look at them without a smile coming to your face. And I like that!

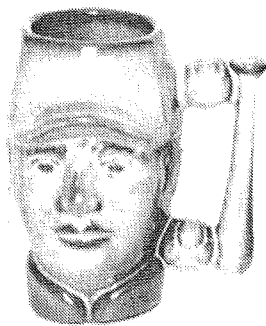
Unfortunately, Uncle Sam was not a happy man. He was really serious about wanting YOU to join the army. But a plan was in place to do a series. So on to the next one...

The next Toby was the Cowboy. Being Okies, cowboys are very significant to us. They’re a part of our culture. After all, what better loved heroes are there than Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and Hopalong Cassidy! Once again, it’s nearly impossible to get hats with wide brims that turn up on the sides to come out of a two-halved mold. But on this one, I did okay.

I was dating a guy named Bob at the time, and I gave him one of the first cowboy mugs. Because he had a mustache, and so did the Cowboy, I understand that to this day he claims I designed it after him. I won’t say I didn’t, because Bob was a pretty dashing man. But in truth, I think the strongest influences were probably Roy, Gene, and Hoppy.

So where can we go from here? What’s left? Sports, of course! Now, I ask you. Once we take the fact that we have no hand painting to lend any character to the face, or to give a variety of color to the clothing, and we’re totally dependent on the design itself to represent our subject, then add to our design limitations the fact that our subject has a hole in its head—there’s almost no place to go!

How to represent a baseball player? He’s a man in a baseball hat with a ball and a bat for a handle, of course. Now where do we go for the next one? Once again, consider our limitations. The next one was a



*Top: Uncle Sam (#600) 1976, and Cowboy (#601) 1977
Bottom: Baseball Player (#602) 1978, Golfer (#603) 1979, and Irishman (#604) 1980*

golfer, who also wears a ball cap, and you make his golf club into a handle. My Irishman was still sitting on the shelf in my studio, and it was a natural for the fifth and final one. Ho hum. The truth is, Toby mugs were not really for Frankoma, as Frankoma was.

But it had been more or less decided that we would come out with a different Toby mug each year. Collecting was fast becoming a big thing in the 70's. There were the Collectors Vases, the Teenagers of the Bible Plates, the Christmas Plates, all doing well. In my zeal and enthusiasm to give everyone the chance to own and enjoy, collectible or not, I came up with this idea.

The Toby mugs would be dated the year they were introduced to the market, which would be for the collectors who want "dated" things. The following year the date would be taken off, and it would become an ordinary everyday mug, giving the retail shop owners, and Frankoma, a nice mug that could be sold for more than just one year. Then a new dated mug would be introduced.

Summary: There were a total of five Toby mugs, beginning with Uncle Sam (#600) in 1976, then the Cowboy (#601) in 1977, the Baseball Player (#602) in 1978, the Golfer (#603) in 1979, and the Irishman (#604) in 1980. After the year of their introduction, the mugs were continued to be made with no date.

Parenthetically, many collectors are very quick to say, "Oh, make it a limited edition!" It's a difficult concept for collectors to accept, especially in a case like mine. I'm an artist, being asked to limit the production of a certain piece, then after that number has been reached, kill the design. But I was also a manufacturer. And to kill a good design hurts, because *the weekly payroll goes on!* As a manufacturer, I had to think in terms of "now," rather than what its value "could be in years to come."

This was the dilemma I was trying to avoid by approaching the Toby mugs in the way I did. "If art is good, it will live" was John Frank's motto. I still have a little trouble disregarding that statement. After all, the original concept upon which Frankoma was founded was, "Fine pottery that everyone can afford to live with and enjoy."

WHERE DO IDEAS COME FROM?

I've been asked several times to talk about the subject that always begins with, "Where do you get your design ideas?" It's taken a while to get my thoughts together so I can come up with an answer for you. There is, of course, no simple answer.

But something happened this week that became a sort of a catalyst for me to begin writing about it. We ran across a particularly lovely coffee mug that the

folks had apparently picked up somewhere in their travels. The mark on bottom told me it was made in Ireland. At first I didn't see the true beauty of it, but I knew instantly that it had been an inspiration for Daddy's C-10 mug. I sat at the kitchen table and held this lovely mug in my hands for a long time, appreciating its simple shape, its fine glaze, and even the hand painting on the drinking side. I had to smile, because that question, "Where do your ideas come from?" came to haunt me.

Daddy was a great artist when it came to creating pottery shapes. I assume you all agree with that statement, or you wouldn't be the Frankomaniacs who go out looking for his works. First of all, I think it must go back to his exposure to all kinds of great art at the Chicago Art Institute. There he lived among such a wide variety of arts—ceramics, paintings, sculpture, jewelry, and so on. He was surrounded with it, he was thrilled by it, he reveled in it, and he became hooked for life. Where our ideas come from. Hmmm.

I was asked recently by a Tulsa columnist to talk about our family's favorite vacations or vacation spots. HA! Our vacations were going to wholesale gift shows! (I can remember only two exceptions.)

There was one we took, a long time ago, that was a 6-week "gift show" vacation. We were going to make the Los Angeles Gift Show, drive up the coast to the San Francisco show, make the Portland show, then on up to the Seattle show, and head for home.

Then, as now, few gift shows allow children to attend, because these are concentrated workplaces where retailers go to buy merchandise for their places of business. I was only ten, so I was destined to see a *lot* of movies that trip. But that didn't mean I didn't have a great vacation. We drove for a whole week to get to Los Angeles (no four-lane interstates then), and there was a lot to see on the way.

We started out early enough so we could first go down to Laguna Beach and spend a couple of days in what was then the "Mecca for Artists." And what did we do? We went from one end of the whole area to the other, stopping at every pottery place we could find—studio potteries, big manufacturers, garage potteries, roadside stands—anything we could find with four walls that made or sold pottery. We didn't buy much, we just looked and marveled at all the exciting and inspiring concepts, ideas, techniques, and products these talented artists were producing.

Remember our European trip in the summer of 1960? (See Donna's *Clay in the Master's Hands*, 1995, Page 98.) Throughout all eight countries, every town we went to in Europe, the first thing we did was visit all the potters we could find, see every example of great ceramic art and tile, plus we hit every single museum that held art of *any* kind! Our vacations were like that. Even if it was supposed to be strictly a business trip, we always found time to stop here and there and look at all kinds of art, observing what other art-

ists were doing.

Many times in my life I asked Mother to show me how to cook a certain dish, or how to make the dough for those to-die-for cinnamon rolls she used to bake. Her instructions included a lot of things like, "Just a dash or two of this," or "Cook it for a while, but not too long," or "Let it simmer until..." It made me crazy trying to write down her recipes for things, because I didn't know what "too long" was, or if "simmering" meant boiling, or bubbling like an erupting volcano, and just how much was "a little bit." How the heck did she know what she knew?! She had learned from her own mother, of course, along with a culinary instinct born of a lifetime of observing and experimenting to know exactly what the results of whatever she did would be. (She was also an artist in the kitchen, something I was never destined to be!)

How does any gourmet cook know that his or her creation needs "just a dash of oregano" or "just a pinch more of salt?" How does an artist know that a certain line should have a little more curve and concavity to it? How does a farmer know the very day his crop is ready for harvesting? How does a mother know what to do to comfort her hurting child?

I'll wager everyone has heard a young student say something like, "Why do I have to take Ancient History? I'll never need it! It won't help me get a job." Well, maybe he won't need the *facts* about Ancient History. But by exercising his mind and teaching it how to learn, flex, and expand, those things he *will* need to know are going to be more easily learned when he needs to learn them. How can you tell him that *he has to learn to learn*—that it's all just "grist for the mill"?

If you think I've gotten lost here, just bear with me, because all this *is* leading somewhere.

Where do my design ideas come from? In a lifetime of observing art of every kind—even if I don't consciously remember everything I've seen—each form, each line, each sound, each emotion that's been stirred in me, has made its own unique and individual "groove" in my brain cells.

Whoever we are, our life experiences are brought into us by all six of our senses, travel instantly to our brain and carve the "grooves" that form an infinite number of roadways, are then connected by a lot of little electronic "bridges," which allow the grooves to talk to each other and gather into groups of similarities—which ultimately leads one person to become an engineer, another an artist, another a gourmet chef, and another a heart surgeon.

If we believe God created man in His own image, then how can we *not* believe that each of us has *inherited* the talent and ability to create whatever it is we're led to create?

So after all those processes take place, eventually comes the time we need to create something. Whether starting with a hunk of clay, or words on a page, or

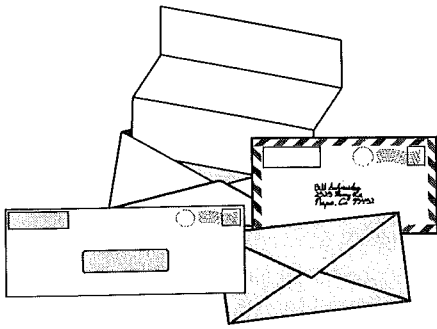
gathering the lumber and wiring and things to build a house—when we're ready, we reach forth, and suddenly it all channels itself from where it's been stored in our subconscious, into our consciousness, and out through our hands and fingers. There's a *world* of things, the big ones and the bits and pieces, moment by moment, that inspire and influence what we ultimately end up creating. You see, there's no need for an artist ever to copy someone else's work!

How many times have I hear the words, "I can't even draw a straight line!" So—?? I still don't know how much salt a "pinch" is. And I certainly can't tell you when it's time to plant a field of wheat, or when it's time to harvest corn.

Art students from all over the world go to Europe to sit for weeks, months, some stay for years, and actually do nothing but copy to the minutest detail the paintings of the great masters. When I first observed this, I was appalled, because I didn't understand why. But what they're doing is learning to use the tools of their trade, and to develop the techniques that produced those masterpieces. When the "grooves" are firmly established and in place in their computer brains, those artists are finally ready to express *their* experiences, and *their* feelings and emotions on canvas, not being hindered by having to stop and think about how to hold their brush, or how to achieve the results they want to accomplish. They're confident and ready to go out and create works that are uniquely theirs—*influenced by, inspired by, but not copies of*.

And now, folks—it's time to get *REAL!* A "commercial" artist such as I am, has to think first of the *function and need* of the piece to be designed. Let's say I'm going to design a mug. It needs to be this tall, this big around, to hold so many ounces, and it has to fit in a certain box, because that's what we already have a truckload of sitting out in the packing department. Or we need a planter, a little bit taller than that particular one we're already producing, a little wider than that other one we have in line that it could be a complementary companion piece to, to sell at a medium price in between those two. It's not just logical, but *absolutely necessary* that we have a line of items that's *utilitarian* to give our sales people to sell! And by that, I mean we must have a *size* balance of height and width, as well as a *price* balance of several pieces that are compatible, etc., etc., etc., so the *retailer* will want to buy them, so he can make a nice display of them, so his *customers* will be attracted to them and therefore be moved to buy. And that's how we all make a living. Got the picture?

Where do ideas for designs come from? I'll say it again—there's no simple answer. But I hope I've given you some idea of what goes into a "design idea." If you still want a short and simple fortune-cookie answer, try asking me again. This time I'll probably put on my "thoughtful" face, shrug my shoulders, and tell you the honest truth—I *really don't know...*



Mail Call

Dear Donna...

I am interested in trading a few of my Frankoma items for Bauer Pottery. I realize this is quite a stretch to be able to find a taker, but there is a possibility.

First, I have the Christmas plates of '68, 69, and 70; also two much rarer items, a pair of Oriental wall masks. I have a feeling there are very few of these in circulation. In addition, the two will have the signature of the artist:

Ray from HI

I answered Ray's letter and included a copy of the PGSheet, inviting him to advertise with us as a way to arrange the trade he was looking for. I soon got this response from him:

Dear Donna...

Thanks for your quick response. I found a trade almost immediately; it was in "Bauer country." I have not seen the Bauer yet (that I traded), but I'm sure it is good quality and a good trade.

As to the Oriental masks in question, one was the mask I did as the first test of the new mold. This first "pull" had no markings. When the production molds were put into place, as I remember, they were properly marked.

The last time I saw you, you were just a toddler. It's been a long time. While a student at the OU art school in 1933 or 1934, I was approached by John Frank asking if I would like a job in the ceramic shop. I had been recommended by Prof. Jacobson. I needed a job, so I accepted. I had no intention of being a potter.

When I finished school, John said he had an opening at his factory. After a year or so, the die was set, and I was hooked. John was a good friend about whom I have only pleasant memories. Ever since then, I have been associated with ceramics and/or product designing.

Even today I am involved in a ceramics project. This sounds a lot like a testimonial, doesn't it?

I had no idea that there was so much interest in collecting Frankoma. When you live in Hawaii for 35 years, you're quite isolated. The *Prairie Green Sheet* is very interesting. I have a few Frankoma items that will remain in the family for some time I hope. Thanks and aloha.

Ray from HI

Good heavens—could this be **THE Ray Murray** who sculpted the Indian Chief so long ago? I wrote back immediately to ask. And since no one knew the name of the artist who did those lovely Oriental masks, we were on the brink of solving another **B-I-G Frankoma mystery!!** Here's what his reply tells us:

Yes, he did do the Indian Chief (#142), and he also did the Oriental Masks (#134 & #135). Those three were done while he was at Frankoma, not as a paid artist, but just to help get more pieces into production. He cannot remember if he did anything else for Frankoma. But he went on later to design for Bauer Pottery. Ray gave me the names of two authors who have written books on Bauer and Southern California potteries, in which he has been written up. I'll soon be doing a phone interview with him, and we'll tell you more about him the next issue!



Dear Donna...

Thank you for your wonderful presentation about your father at the Baptist Third Age Life Center, and for autographing my book. I didn't get anything else done until I finished reading it. It was so inspirational. You did a good job. It was such a pleasure meeting you.

I am primarily a limited edition plate collector. I have all the Frankoma Christmas plates except the first two, and a few other miscellaneous pieces. I really can't tell any difference in the art work of your father and Joniece. After 30 years of collecting, everything I wanted to know about Frankoma collecting just came together at that meeting. I knew about both fires because it was in the newspapers, but I didn't know the depths of your father. What a fine Christian man he really was. It was a very exciting morning for me.

I joined FFCA before I left the meeting and have ordered Phyllis and Tom Bess's *Frankoma and Other Oklahoma Potteries*. Unfortunately, I can't attend the FFCA Reunion 96, as I am scheduled to be in NC on those dates. That is a big disappoint-

ment because I really would like to see your home and meet the other collectors. Maybe another time.

**Peggy from OK
Proud Member #439**

What a pleasure to meet you, Peggy! We're sorry you can't attend the reunion. But keep in touch, and we'll arrange a house tour for you when you return. Please call us soon after the convention—before the house gets messed up again!



Dear Pat Warner...

This morning at 10:08 CST, I called someone in an ad in the *Prairie Green Sheet*—to be told I was over an hour late for the item I was interested in. It was gone! I remarked that I thought calls were not to be made before 10:00 a.m. CST on the 15th. I was told that apparently some persons don't go by the rules, and I replied that this applied to the seller as well!

My suggestion is that this party not be allowed to place any more ads in the PGS if they can't abide by your rules.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. I really enjoy both of your publications, as I am a new "Frank and Homa" (as my children call it) collector.

Pat from AR

You're absolutely right, Pat. Rules are rules, and those few rules we've set up are made to be fair to everyone. We're so sorry to hear that there's a member out there crossing the line. This is the first instance of this we're aware of. We're very sorry it happened to you. We hope that anyone else who has a similar experience will report it to us.



Dear Pat...

We are relatively new members of FFCA. We joined this May, and are enjoying every aspect of the organization. The *Pot & Puma* and *Prairie Green Sheet* are super benefits and very much appreciated.

As a bonus, at a flea market, we recently met Sue Wirth, another member from our northern Minnesota area, and gained a friend with mutual Frankoma Pottery interests. We plan to attend the reunion in September and have made our motel reservations. We are looking forward to getting together at that time with brother Stan McReynolds (TX), also a member, and the Frankomaniac who

got us into collecting Frankoma in the first place.

George and Margaret from MN

Welcome, welcome! You see, when you're part of the Frankoma Family, the distance between Texas and Minnesota, even northern Minnesota, is not such a big stretch after all. Thanks for writing, and see you in September!



Dear Donna and Joniece...

I have enjoyed your tag-team collaboration on Joniece's *Believe It Or Not*. It has recounted the little stories of the creative process that gives a conscious background to why so many Frankoma pieces are so immediately special and attractive to collectors. Through them, I have received a glimpse of your personal lives as they intertwined with the work at the pottery. However, I was still not prepared for the poignancy of the *May Pot & Puma* issue.

I knew exactly what Donna felt when she handled the vase she found in Muskogee. It is similar to the feeling I get with many Frankoma pieces. I can feel its integrity, which is a marrying of love and craftsmanship. Yet, even more so for you, as you were able to feel the vibrations of a man whom you loved and knew so well.

The sections *Of One Mind* and *The Price of Creative Freedom* were a rich blend of remembered oral narrative and a specific understanding that has been wrought by being in touch with your own feelings of love for your parents.

Thank you for creating a window into a past which, through your sharing and through the availability of your parents' handiwork, continues to have a bearing upon the psyche of the collectors who have become your friends.

I would like to share with you a loss which occurred around the time of your own dear mother's passing. I am glad I was able to meet her at the last Family gathering. And now, because of the synchronicity of our losses, and from what you will read from my story, I often think of my friend and your mother together.

I would be happy if you could use the story in the *Pot & Puma*. I look forward to visiting with you both again this September.

Many warm wishes,
Jim from TX

FRANKOMA HONORED

BY JAMES R. LUSK—DALLAS, TX

Here is my story...

My best friend lost his lover this past Christmas. He and we had survived through a long autumn as he continued to get weaker and gradually gave in to his disease, and now with his goal of living until Christmas accomplished, he died the following day. His last wish was to have his ashes buried beneath the bird bath in my friend's back yard, where they had previously spent long summer evenings watching the cardinals, robins, and later the owls, come to refresh themselves.

Our friends gathered for a memorial service on St. Patrick's Day to remember his life. We had chosen that day, as it would be spring and we could then plant flowers around the bird bath. We cried and laughed and drank that day, a regular Irish wake. Later, my friend showed me he had held back some of the ashes. He wanted to keep them in the house, but didn't want them sitting in some ostentatious urn, which would immediately call attention to itself and reveal to anyone who came through the door what it held. I knew instantly what was needed.

Living in Texas, I knew I would have to travel to Oklahoma for the piece of Frankoma Pottery I was looking for. Here, I tend to find mostly dinnerware. I went to Oklahoma one Sunday to attend the Red Earth Pow Wow and to look for the pottery. The first antique mall I went into contained a rather ratty shop run by an older couple. They had lots of Frankoma, most of it over-priced, but sitting on the shelf by itself was the piece I was looking for.

It was a #833 Swirled Honey Jug in Desert Gold, with its waxed cork intact. I looked around some more in the shop, trying not to seem too excited by my find. Finally, I went up to the lady and offered to pay ten percent less than the asking price, which she accepted. Even though I was the only one who knew its purpose, I still did not want to pay more than book value. I drove back to Dallas with that strange feeling of accomplishment that doesn't seem to have a trace of pride contained in it, because, although I knew what piece of Frankoma I wanted and how to go about finding it, the serendipity of it appearing and my purchasing it gave me a way to honor both of my friends.

Upon returning to Dallas, I went straight to my friend's house. He knew I had gone up for the Pow Wow, yet he asked me what I had brought him. I pulled out the perfect "urn," and together we put into it the remainder of our friend's ashes.

Now it sits on his bookshelf, a handsome reminder for us, a honey pot for his "honey," a swirl of Desert Gold representing the progression and movement of a single being's life, sweeping him from the edges of physical existence into the center of our hearts, always.

Thank you, Jim, for your eloquent and moving story. We sincerely believe that our father would also feel as we do, that the lowly honey jug has found its ultimate calling. One can almost hear him laugh and say, "You see? When we become clay in the Master's hands, we can never know in what ways we'll be called upon to serve." Never again will we look at that graceful little swirl without being reminded of the honor and meaning you've given to it.



Endangered Species

The following is an article found in Grace Lee's personal files. It was sent to her by a former Sapulpa resident and her close friend of many years, now living in Norman, Oklahoma. It is from the OU News Service, printed in the Norman Transcript in 1990. We have deleted the names of recipients of the awards for obvious reasons of privacy.

An "endangered species" at the University of Oklahoma School of Drama—the Buffalo Mask Award—survives and is stronger, thanks to intervention by artists who mustered their talents to preserve the 61-year-old tradition.

The ceramic masks represent university history that goes back to the 1920s, when Kiowa Indian artists were trained on the campus and the University Theater was founded. (*Referring to those who have since become known as "The Kiowa Five," now all well-known Indian artists, discovered and brought to OU by Dr. Jacobson.*)

Despite threats from migration, fire and bankruptcy, the continuity of the awards is assured. They will be even more durable, following this year's switch from pottery to porcelain.

"The original Buffalo Mask awards were Frankoma Pottery," said John A. Bryan, director of marketing for the University Theater. "At first they were black-glazed masks, which were large enough to be worn. After sculptor John Frank left the OU art faculty to establish his factory in Sapulpa, he designed smaller plaques that were glazed in Frankoma green or white.

"Frankoma collectors frequently contact the drama

OU'S Buffalo Mask Award Still Survives Despite Fire

school about purchasing the plaques," Bryan said. "The plaque are increasing in value because the molds were destroyed in the Frankoma fire, and the future of the plant is in question. However, Buffalo Masks are not for sale. They must be earned."

The continuation of the Buffalo Mask Awards in three-dimension rather than certificate form can be credited to the efforts of Bryan and artists in the Norman community.

After the Frankoma source was destroyed and the drama school's stockpile of plaques depleted, Bryan enlisted the help of OU Theater Guild member Tony Maffucci, a Norman dental technician and sculptor. Maffucci made a scaled-down mold from the only known original Buffalo Mask, a gift to the School of Drama from John Dunn.

The new masks were cast in porcelain by a local art instructor. She did a rush job so they would be ready for the drama school's 1990 awards ceremony.

The ceramic Buffalo Masks are based on a design concept by Cedrick Marks, who was given the task of devising an emblem for program covers of the University Playhouse in 1927, its first year of production.

Marks was the first scene designer for the University Playhouse and also was a part-time instructor in the OU School of Art. Through art school director Oscar Jacobson, Marks came in contact with a group of Kiowa Indian art students. He learned that Kiowas often wore painted buffalo skulls in ceremonial dances. With this in mind, Marks used the form of Indian buffalo skulls for a design of the masks of comedy and tragedy.

Frank, who was head of the ceramic department in the OU School of Art, translated Marks' design into ceramic form in 1929.

(Ed. note: We regret that news of Frankoma's rebuilding and its being back in business nine months after the fire did not reach Norman in those seven years. Joniece would have been only too happy to remake the mold and reproduce the masks in Frankoma for her alma mater.)

TO THE FRANKOMA FAMILY, FROM JONIECE AND DONNA

For the last few months, we've been setting aside a lot of Frankoma odds and ends that belonged to our parents, as well as some of our own pieces. No rare collectibles, but mostly dinnerware. After a lot of soul searching as to what we should do with these 100+ items, it is our feeling that they would best be appreciated by members of the Frankoma Family to own and use.

Please know that we are not in any way seeking to take advantage of anyone by asking inflated prices for the pottery because of who they belonged to. Prices will be very reasonable. And yet, because of who they belonged to, many of the pieces have some very nice vibrations from those who have used and loved them. A lot of it is quite beautiful, and as much as we'd love to have it, we can't keep everything. Fate has placed us in a situation that dictates our passing these nice pieces along, and we would like to offer our Frankoma Family first opportunity. They will be for sale at the reunion, beginning at noon on Saturday.

(The number of pieces sold to any one person will necessarily be limited. No dealers for resale, and no advance calls or offers please.)

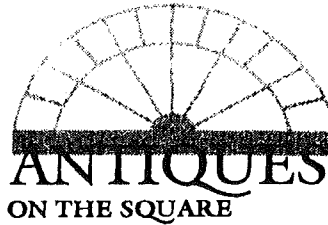
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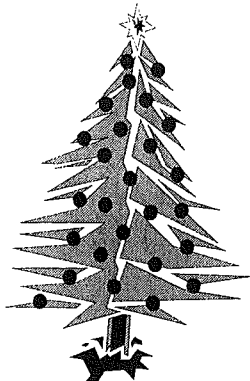


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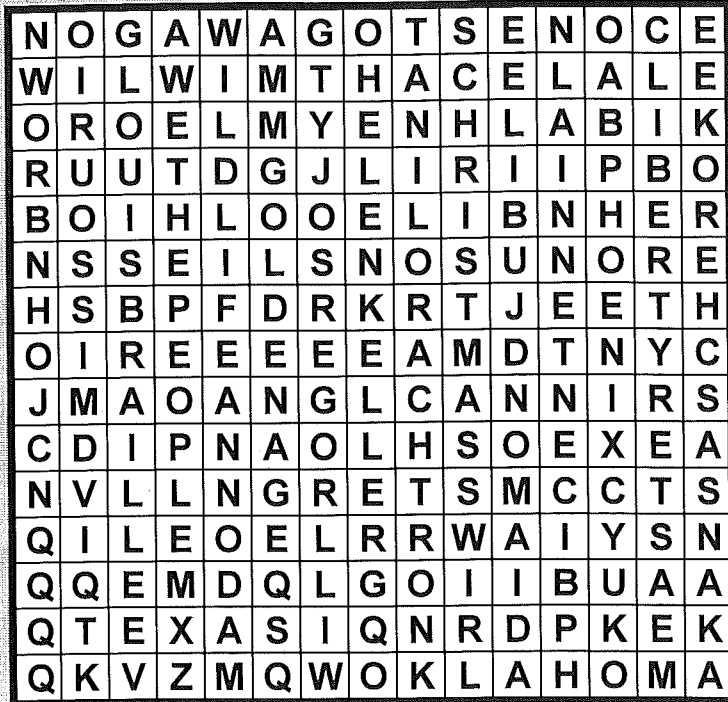
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- Diamond Jubilee
- Easter
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- Missouri
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