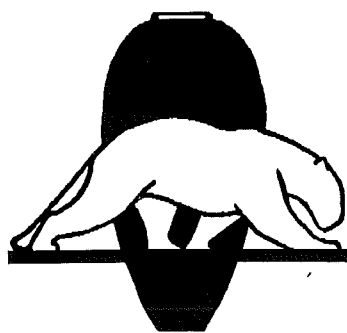


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Pot & Puma

Published by the Frankoma Family Collectors Association



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

RAY STOLL

Our third Annual Reunion has come and gone, and what a glorious time it was! Freddie's Pavilion was an ideal location and facility, the weather was grand, and the many members who came to share their time and treasures with us were terrific.

The successful efforts of so many people made this truly a time to remember. My sincere thanks go to all who volunteered their time, efforts and resources to make it work!

Our new President, Bert Huddleston, takes over the first of the year, and I want to be the first to wish him well, and to thank him for being willing to accept the responsibilities that go with the position. I also want to assure him and our membership that I will continue to assist in any way needed to ensure the continued growth and well-being of our organization. With such giving and talented people as Donna Frank and Nancy Littrell handling the administrative, membership and publication aspects of FFCA, I have no doubts concerning the future for us. It must have been guidance from the Higher Power that led us to select these two fine ladies for their positions of trust and responsibility.

I note with pleasure that several of our members have submitted articles for the *Pot & Puma*. I hope this will inspire more of you to do the same. The sharing of knowledge and ideas has been an important part of the growth of FFCA. Each of us probably has at least a small addition we can make to the overall scope of information available about Frankoma. When we then share it, we all become richer by that bit of knowledge.

As for me, in addition to working with the new President and the Board of Directors as Immediate Past President, I am researching and preparing a shopping guide to Oklahoma shops and malls where one can expect to find Frankoma, Gracetone and other Oklahoma potteries. It will be based on numerous visits, the quality of the shop/mall and its merchandise, knowledge and cooperativeness of the owner/operator, and similar factors.

I hope to have it ready for the Spring 1997 shopping season, and will make revisions as necessary due to changing factors. There will be no advertising, either solicited or accepted, as I want this to be free from any bias or influence that this could cause. Availability will be announced in an upcoming *Pot & Puma* or *Prairie Green Sheet*.

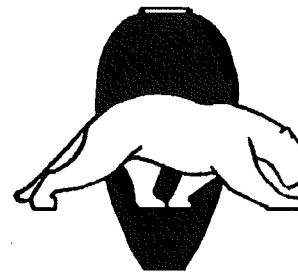
And now it's time to say so long, and thanks to all of you for the privilege of serving as the first President of this vibrant, growing organization known as the Frankoma *Family* Collectors Association. May God bless you all, my cousins! ■

About the Cover Photo:

T3-War God Mug

From the Club Trade Winds Polynesian Collection designed by Joniece Frank (1960) for the Trade Winds Motel in Tulsa, OK.

No.: T3-War God Mug
Dates: 1960-1961
Size: 8" Tall (1-qt)
Glaze: Gracetone Cinnamon
Mark: CLUB TRADE WINDS
Tulsa, Okla. T3
© FRANKOMA



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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. These photos are not reproduced to scale, however, the actual size is given whenever possible. We wish to extend our gratitude and thanks to

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FROM THE HISTORIAN

MAXINE SADDLER

Your Frankoma Historian recently received for preservation a copy of *YOUR COMMUNITY WORLD*, a section of the *Tulsa World*. It had a very interesting front-page article promoting the up-coming Reunion 96. Our Donna had been interviewed, and it featured a gorgeous photo of her by the fireplace almost hugging some lovely vintage pieces of Frankoma. It was a great article, and three words in it were very special to this reader.

APPRECIATION— PRESERVATION— PROMOTION—

They referred to Frankoma as a collectible. Let's talk about these words.

APPRECIATION—Finding our first piece of Frankoma is the beginning of a love affair. Maybe the piece was given to you as a gift; maybe you purchased it on a vacation trip; or you stumbled onto it somewhere and thought it useful, pretty, or cheap. However it happened, that's the beginning of APPRECIATION.

PRESERVATION—You treasure that piece, you begin to add others, and you soon realize this *stuff* is really gorgeous. Then you learn where it came from, who made it, why they made it, and Frankoma starts to take on a special life of its own. *Now you're hooked!* Those few items soon grow to *scores, hundreds, even thousands!* You decide to collect certain kinds of pieces, or perhaps certain colors. One piece leads to another. APPRECIATION has set in, and PRESERVATION is moving in. One member shows and tells a friend, a new collector joins the group, and that one tells another, and so on.

PROMOTION—This comes naturally with being a member of the Frankoma Family of collectors. So round up that Frankoma out there! Some of it is on shelves, in attics, in basements, some long forgotten. As we search for Frankoma, it turns up in the most unusual and fun places. I heard the other day that an old Three Deer Group surfaced. Wow! What a find for someone! And PROMOTION moves even farther with planned scholarships for select art students. And who knows what our efforts in this direction may bring!

Many members hope that in the future a Frankoma Museum will materialize. If John and Grace Lee Frank accomplished the impossible feats they did, the least that we, the devoted mem-

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

SAMUEL A. "PAT" WARNER

This is my swan song. I have enjoyed serving as an officer of FFCA. It has been a very special privilege for me to serve our Frankoma Family.

My decision not to continue in the FFCA line was prompted primarily by my age, and the large accumulation of Frankoma that I have purchased in years past. Like everyone else, I guess I thought I would live forever. I now realize I must get my collection under control, so that my family may more easily handle it—at some future date, of course.

When I began collecting Frankoma, I was buying 80% and selling 20%. And now I must reverse those figures—sell 80% and buy or retain 20%.

As an FFCA officer, I feel it would be a conflict of interest to be selling so much while serving on the Board of Directors. I don't want members to feel I am trying to get rich while serving in a decision-making position. I do not want to cast a shadow on the organization by my increased selling. I am very happy I can share with other collectors some of my Frankoma treasures that I have enjoyed for so many years.

I wish to thank my fellow officers for a job well done. I will continue to support the Frankoma Family Collectors Association 100% in any way I can. Please call on me any time. ■

Continued from column 1

bers of FFCA, can do is continue to remember and embrace these words: APPRECIATION—PRESERVATION—and—PROMOTION.

Now it's YOUR TURN to send your SHOW AND TELL stories and photos to Donna and Nancy. Folks, we're now 800+ strong, all over these United States, and we're barely two years old! As we share our Frankoma treasures and experiences, we find we can do whatever we set out to do! ■

Ed. Note: Actually, we must give credit to Nancy and Steve Littrell. They chose those words when designing our first membership cards. They're now printed at the bottom of our FFCA letterhead—*A national non-profit organization dedicated to the appreciation, preservation, and promotion of Frankoma Pottery as a collectible.* It says it all in one lovely little breath, doesn't it? Thank you, Maxine, for highlighting, defining, and giving thoughtful meaning to who and what we are!

FROM THE SECRETARY

DONNA FRANK

My sister Joniece and I are very humbled by your post-reunion cards and letters. We confess we're a bit taken aback, though, to receive all this gratitude for doing something that comes so naturally for us.

Just think about it, cousins. If you lived in this house, what would you do—lock the doors and keep it to all to yourself?

Just realize that we live here because the house was left to us, and also because we need a place to live. We're very fortunate that it happens to fit the life styles of this "odd couple." We can live and work apart from each other in opposite ends of the house, but come together when we want or need to at the kitchen table. When we need a critique or some advice on what we're working on, the other's door is always open for a walk-in visit.

In the meantime, the house also doubles as a sort of "ceramics museum" for you collectors, a "warehouse" for FFCA's intended future museum. At convention time, as always, it will be open to our Frankoma Family.

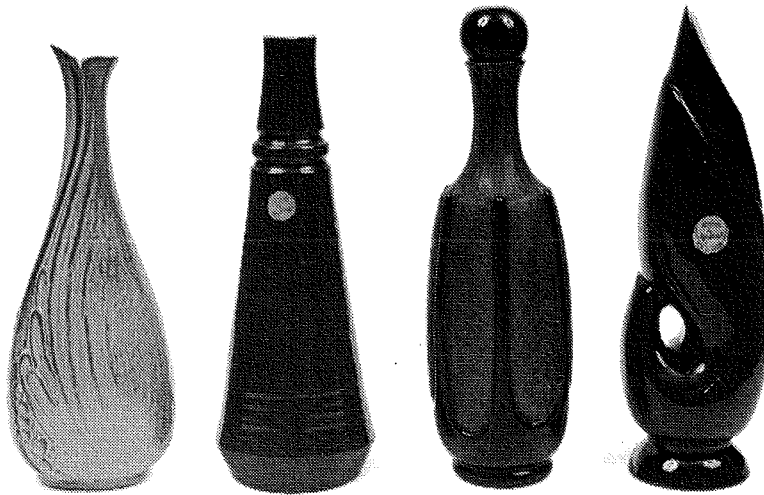
You're the ones, after all, that go out into the world and search out, buy, collect, appreciate, preserve, and love and honor the works of the artists of the Frank family. How could we not welcome you into our home?

Please understand that we cannot possibly answer personally all your beautiful cards and letters with all your lovely sentiments. If we did, this publication would never get to the printer! But know that we do read and savor every single piece of mail we receive from you. And if it's a question you have, you'll always get a response, even if it's, "we don't know" or "we'll find out."

Wasn't our Reunion 96 simply GRAND?!? It was you who made it so. And from our hearts, we thank you for being the wonderful ones! ■



Show & Tell Us



Dialogues With My Frankoma V's

BY JUDY BREYMEYER—EDMOND, OK

I'm a new member. I want to be a contributor in some way, and you asked for collecting stories. So, for better or for worse, here is mine.

I began collecting Frankoma last year when my son and his family moved to Sapulpa. He was hired as football coach for the high school team, the Sapulpa Chieftains. I wanted a memento that he and his family could have to always remind them of their days there. I finally found an Indian Head at a local antique mall. On another weekend, I found Donna's second edition of *Clay in the Master's Hands* at Philbrook Museum in Tulsa, which I couldn't put down.

I've lived in Edmond for twenty years, although I was born in Central Illinois. But I love Oklahoma, and I'm here to stay. I have a partial degree in art and taught hobby ceramics for eight years.

After hours, days, months, miles of walking, stooping, bending, probing, peering, seeking out, wandering, wondering, traveling, reading, studying, hoping, looking in clean shops and dusty dirty ones, I am sitting down to write my

thoughts about my joy of discovering the Frankoma "V" vases.

Some of these vases sit on special shelves in my home, while others are out there somewhere waiting to find me. The ones that live with me I sometimes talk to.

When I look at my V-1, I recall the day we met, and I say, "There you stood, tall, sturdy, proud. Remember? I chose you over another during a long day of searching here in Edmond."

I may say to my V-9, "You were a game of chance I won on a day in Oklahoma City. With your wonderful Art Deco style and fine textures, you pleaded to come home with me."

To my V-2, "I recall the day I found you in a store in Guthrie. You sat there in quiet submission, waiting for me, gracefully reaching for the sky, your surprise matching mine."

And there's my lovely V-7. Another shopping trip to Guthrie. "What joy you brought to me that day I found you! What texture and glow you bring!"

My V-6 was found in Oklahoma City. "There you sit in gentle stillness. Your feminine beauty

brings such warm memories of the day you caught my eye."

The stark simplicity is what I love about my V-3, while my V-4 is fragile but firm, its lines reaching ever upward. And the V-5 is a design of pure wonderment. All three of these I discovered in Oklahoma City, and I brought them all home with me on the same day!

I found the V-8 one day in Tulsa. "You startled me with your richness of color! The aura of your patriotic beauty shouted to me, as loud as the pounding of my heart."

"Hello, my V-10. You're a 'vessel in clay of ancient design,' come to remind; I was almost blind on the day of your find!"

And then came my V-11. "With your firm, decorative lines, I'm content now that you've found your mate."

My V-14 sits prettily on my shelf, sharing its story of Frankoma glory. V-12 is my "Goddess of Art." V-13 always brings me a smile.

And now I say to the V-15, "I look forward to the day you bring your beauty into my home, you wonderful vessel of clay. Please come home to me soon!" ❖

The Buffalo and The Electric Skirt!?!

BY JO HUMPPI—TULSA, OK

Our Really T-R-A-G-I-C Collecting Story

Last year my husband Bill and I went to an estate sale. He usually cases a sale for items of Frankoma first, but this time he got distracted by some luggage (of all things).

Right away I found a piece of Frankoma that I couldn't imagine what it could have been used for. But I knew it was Frankoma, it was really cheap, and I claimed it. (For a long time, all I knew to call it was my "1950's electric skirt." Even Phyllis Bess didn't know what it was! Last year Joniece identified it for me as an "aromatic scent dispenser.")

I wandered into the kitchen of this estate sale, where I came face to face with a gentlemen who had in his hand an old *Joe Taylor Buffalo*! I had in my hand this funny looking "electric skirt." He looked at my find, I looked at his, and we stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity. (He didn't know what mine was—but I certainly knew what his was!)

Finally, we walked away from each other, and I ran to find Bill to tell him about the Buffalo, really upset that he hadn't found it first.

At the desk near the front door, we watched the man pay \$6 for that Buffalo.

Bill and I are still married, but this incident was for a long time a sore spot in our relationship. There was a time we could get really tacky accusing the other of letting that Buffalo slip through our fingers!

Of course, in all fairness, it wasn't the fault of either one of us. That man had already found it before we walked in the door. But—why couldn't we have arrived five minutes earlier? If we had run that last yellow light, the Buffalo could have been ours! If we had gone to the sale before lunch instead of after lunch, would it be sitting on our shelf today? If—if—if. I guess we'll never know for sure.

I later told Phyllis Bess about

that Buffalo, and she said she knew of it, and it had been sold at least twice since that day, remarking that it was in a very unusual color. And from what I can remember in my over-excited state, I described to Donna the color I *think* it was, and she says she believes it must have been *Cherokee Red*.

Now I ask you—doesn't this qualify for a "tragic" collecting story?

However, I try to console myself by recalling my thrill, years ago, when I found at a Salvation Army Thrift Shop somewhere in Southern California a perfect, green, pre-1938 (made in Norman) #72 "Large Indian Jar" (pictured on the back of Phyllis's latest book). Her book says it's worth \$300-400. I paid \$1.25 for mine! ❖



#72 Large Indian Jar

The Polynesian

TRADE WINDS

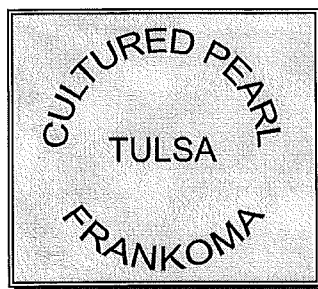
Items

BY RAY STOLL—OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

The *Trade Winds*, located at 51st Street and Peoria in Tulsa, was the first of the *Trade Winds Motels*. Later it became known as *Trade Winds West*. When it opened, the restaurant was called *Club Trade Winds*, and was Polynesian in concept and motif. (The management changed some years later, and it became *The Tiki Nook*.) It was originally planned to be the ultimate in Polynesian style restaurants, to surpass and become the superior successor to the then-popular *Trader Vic* restaurants.

Club Trade Winds followed *Trader Vic's* practice of serving exotic drinks in exotic containers that the customers took home, the cost of the container being included in the price of the drink. Frankoma was contracted (1960–1961) to furnish a number of appropriate pieces, and Joniece designed these interesting items, with Father's assistance on the #T12 Bird of Paradise Pitcher and the #T11 Palm Leaf Platter (see February 1996 issue, "The Palm Leaf" on Page 16). The original beverage containers were the #T3 War God and #T4 Widow Maker Mugs, and the #T7 Coconut and #T2 Bamboo Tumblers. The reason these containers were so large is that *Club Trade Winds* could charge a whole lot of money for a whole lot of ice, while the customer felt he was getting his money's worth!

As companion pieces to complete the Polynesian line, there was the Bird of Paradise Coconut Pitcher, the Palm Leaf Platter, #T5 Tiki God Salt and Peppers, #T8 Fish Ash Tray, #T9–7" Clam Shell Dish, #T10–13" Clam Shell Tray, and #T6 Tiki God



Serving Bowl. The latter piece was half of a 3-sided coconut shell, held by three Tikis (Tikis same as #5 Tiki S&P), used not only to serve food, but drinks as well. It has what seems to be a little "foot" on the bottom, but if you'll look at the inside, you'll see that foot is actually a "well" that a tall highball glass fits down into. When the bartender set the drink down into

the center, he then filled the bowl with ice, and the drink stayed chilled in its nest of ice. It also kept the glass upright as the ice melted and/or as the drink was consumed.

All of the *original* pieces, except for the Salt and Peppers, had "Club Trade Winds" on the bottom, along with either "Tulsa, Okla." and the stock number and/or the copyright symbol with "Frankoma" on the unglazed bottom. The Salt and Peppers have "Trade Winds" printed on their backs.

Joniece tells us that—as *best she can remember*—the original order was for 350 of each of the drink containers, with an appropriate number of the other pieces, probably 25 of the pitchers and platters, and maybe 50 each of the other pieces. She also says that she remembers only the one original order. If there were re-orders, she says, they were very small, like a couple of dozen each of one or two items.

In the first few months, the theft rate on these beautiful pieces was so very high, it became cost prohibitive, and the *Club Trade Winds* could no longer justify continuing to use the Frankoma pieces.

As these were popular items, several of them were put into the Frankoma line for a short time. The #T3S War God Mug and the #T4S Widow Maker Mug were *reduced* in size (1967–1971) to become either

vases or decorative drinking mugs, but only a small quantity was made.

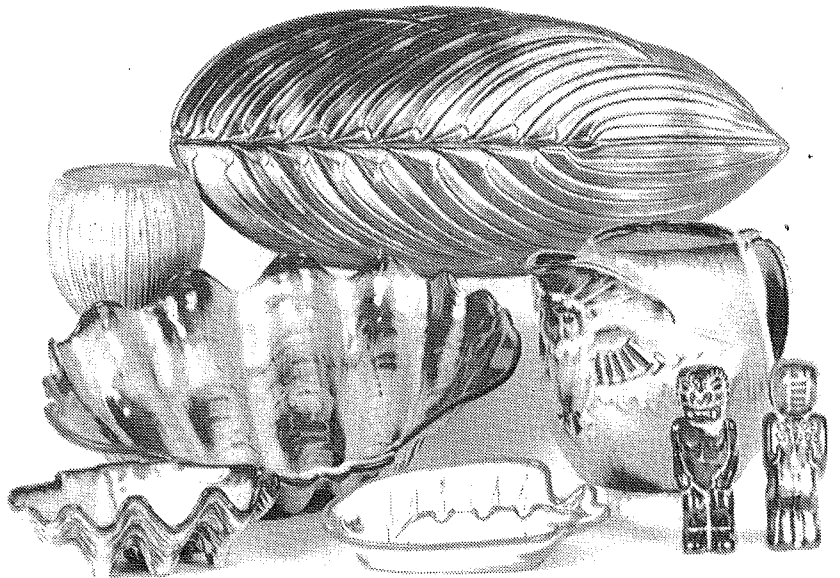
In about 1971, Joniece became friends with two men who were starting a small Polynesian restaurant in conjunction with an after-hours club called *The Cultured Pearl*. With the encouragement of her father, Joniece made a few of the old *Club Trade Winds* items—perhaps 25 or so of some of the smaller items. Both the restaurant and this association were very short lived, and items with *The Cultured Pearl* marking are very rare.

For the actual *Club Trade Winds* order, the colors used were Woodland Moss, Prairie Green, Desert Gold, Onyx Black, Clay Blue, White Sand and Flame, although other colors—even Gracetone's Cinnamon—have been found. And remember, this was the time of brick red clay that produced the richest glaze colors. Some of both sizes of the Shell Dishes were lined in White, though most of the *Club Trade Winds* Shell Dishes were one color. When items were placed in the general line, all the colors then being used can be found.

The #T9T and #T10T Clam Shell Dishes with White inside were marked with a "T" after the number and were offered only in Prairie Green, Woodland Moss and Satin Brown from 1962 to 1964—I have, however, seen them without the second T designation and in other colors. Miniatures were made of the Fish Ash Tray (#468) and the Clam Shell Dish (#476), which were also used as Christmas Cards in 1960 and 1963, respectively.

All of the *Club Trade Winds* and the *Cultured Pearl* items are difficult to find, and are a very fine addition to any collection. However, the unmarked pieces are also certainly worthy of collecting. In short, keep your eyes open for these unusual and beautiful examples of Joniece's artistry and inventiveness—truly a collector's prize!

My thanks to Joniece Frank for her invaluable assistance with information contained in this article. ❖



ROW 1: T3S-6" War God Mug, T3-8" War God Mug, T4-7" Widow Maker Mug
 ROW 2: T2-7" Bamboo Tumbler, T6-Tiki God Serving Bowl, T4S-5" Widow Maker Mug
 ROW 3: T7-4" Coconut Planter, T11-17" Palm Leaf Tray
 ROW 4: T10-13.5" Clam Shell Dish, T12-2-qt. Bird of Paradise Coconut Pitcher
 ROW 5: T9-7" Clam Shell Dish, T8-7" Fish Ash Tray, T5-Tiki Salt & Pepper

Number	Description	Dates	Trade Winds (1960-1961)	Cultured Pearl (c. 1971)	Plain
T1	1-qt Bamboo Tumbler *				
T2	7" Bamboo Tumbler	1960-1976	\$20-\$25	\$25-\$30	\$6-\$10
T3	8" 1-qt. War God Mug	1960-1961	\$60-\$85		
T3S	6" War God Mug	c. 1967-1971		\$35-\$50	\$20-\$30
T4	7" Widow Maker Mug w/handle	1960-1961	\$75-\$90		
T4S	5" Widow Maker Mug w/handle	c. 1967-1971		\$30-\$40	\$20-\$30
T5	Tiki Salt and Peppers	1960-1961	\$60-\$90		
T6	Tiki God Serving Bowl	1960-1961	\$125-\$150		
T7	4" Coconut Planter	1960-1994	\$10-\$15		\$4-\$10
T8	7" Fish Ash Tray	1960-1976	\$15-\$20		\$8-\$10
T9	7" Clam Shell Dish	1960-1994	\$10-\$12		\$5-\$10
T9T	7" Clam Shell Dish w/White inside	1962-1964			\$8-\$15
T10	13.5" Clam Shell Dish	1960-1991	\$25-\$35		\$10-\$20
T10T	13.5" Clam Shell Dish w/White inside	1962-1964			\$35-\$40
T11	17" Palm Leaf Tray	1960-1967	\$30-\$40		\$15-\$25
T12	2-qt. Bird of Paradise Coconut Pitcher	1960-1961	\$80-\$125		

* This 1-qt. Bamboo Tumbler is sometimes listed as part of the Polynesian line, Joniece believes it was never actually produced, and we know of no one who owns one. Let us know if you have one and can disprove this belief of hers and ours!

Values based on 1996 sales and advertisements and were given solely as broad guides for buying or selling.

RARE & SCARCE FRANKOMA FINDS

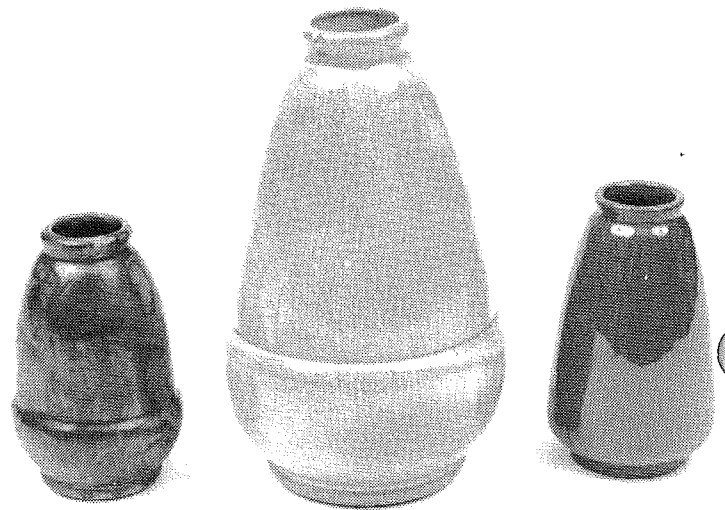
BY SAMUEL A. "PAT" WARNER—OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

JOHN FRANK'S TALLS AND SMALLS

MORE UNUSUAL FRANKOMA FINDS

During my many years of collecting, I have become aware that John Frank made many of the early *Frank Potteries* and *Frankoma* vases, in both tall and short versions. The short versions I would offer as miniature versions of larger pieces from the *Frank Potteries* line. Although most were never shown in the catalogs—I have observed them through my own collecting and from viewing fellow collectors' pieces. If asked, how would you answer this question: "Did *Frank Potteries* make miniatures?" No? Possibly? As we well know, most Frankoma small miniatures are dated around the year 1942 and forward. But I have observed that several early pieces were also made in miniature versions (not tiny, but smaller) that are dated years previous and marked with the India ink stamp of FRANK POTTERIES. So this article is about some very scarce and very rare miniature versions and their companion big brothers made during the "Norman Years," 1933–1938. They are marked as follows:

1. FRANK POTTERIES
NORMAN OKLAHOMA stamped in black India ink; or
2. FRANKOMA stamped in black India Ink; or
3. FRANKOMA with the small round "o" incised in the clay; or
4. "Pot & Puma" mark incised in the clay.



Left: Miniature Cone Vase (unnumbered)
Center: Tall Cone Vase (unnumbered)
Right: Miniature Smooth Cone Vase (unnumbered)

HERE ARE SOME OF MY PERSONAL FAVORITES:

3 UNNUMBERED CONE VASES

None of the Cone Vases are found in any of the catalogs. The tall (unnumbered) Cone Vase is 6–1/2" tall and is seldom found. The little brother is 3–3/4" tall and is *extremely scarce*. The smooth Cone Vase (photo right) is 3–7/8" tall and is also *scarce*. All the Cone Vases are stamped FRANK POTTERIES in India ink; however, I have also found the smooth Cone Vase with a small "o", and are all circa 1933. I have seen these vases in early Desert Gold (Old Gold), Verde Green, Pompeian Bronze, and Cherokee Red. ■

**#21 VASE AND UNNUMBERED
MINIATURE**

One of my earliest finds, the #21 Vase, is found only in the 1936 Frankoma catalog, Page 8. *Frank Potteries* made this vase in both a tall and a short version. The #21 Vase measures 6-5/8" tall, and the miniature (unnumbered) measures 4" tall. The #21 Vase is a difficult find, The miniature (unnumbered) was never shown in any catalog, and it is a *rare* find. These pieces, circa 1933, were made from the *Frank Potteries* molds, with the FRANK POTTERIES India ink stamp, and I have seen them in several early colors. ■



Left: Miniature (unnumbered) Right: #21 Vase



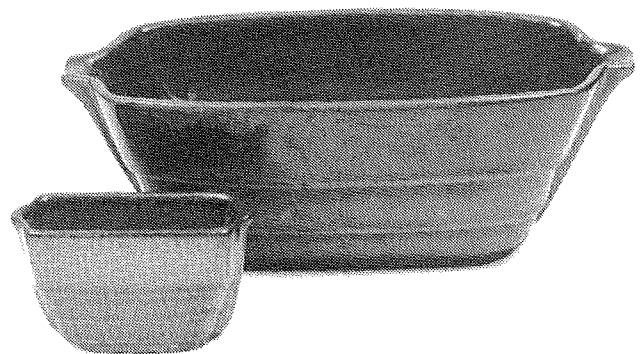
*Left: #78 Vase
Right: Miniature (unnumbered)*

**#78 VASE AND UNNUMBERED
MINIATURE**

The #78 Vase, made from 1934-1942, appears in the 1936, 1938, and 1942 Frankoma catalogs. It is 8-3/4" tall, and 3-1/2" across at the base, marked with the "Pot & Puma". There is a similar—but again different—miniature version made earlier by *Frank Potteries*, circa 1933. It measures 3-1/2" high, and 1-3/4" across the base, has the FRANK POTTERIES India ink stamp, and is *extremely scarce*. The #78 has two long, very slender, decorative handles protruding 1/8" at the top and gradually disappearing into the sides 6-1/2" down—the miniature does not. ■

**#203 OBLONG FLOWER BOWL AND
UNNUMBERED MINIATURE**

This handsome Flower Bowl has four graduated "steps," the top measuring 8-1/2" x 4-1/2". It can occasionally be found with a matching oblong 5-1/2" x 2" flower frog. The miniature (unnumbered) version is usually marked OKLA. GRAND CHAPTER or B.P.W.—most likely made only for those as special orders. Both are *very scarce*, usually with a "Pot & Puma" mark. The little guy, circa 1936-1938, is *rare* and I have seen it in only two colors, Prairie Green and Royal Blue. ■



*Left: Miniature (unnumbered)
Right: #203 Oblong Flower Bowl*

And so, we must ask, "Which came first—the chicken or the egg?" Sometimes the larger piece was first, followed by the smaller, and sometimes it was the other way around. Not always can we know for sure.

I hope this will help you in identifying some of these pieces—if you should get lucky enough to run across one. They're *all* scarce to very rare, very collectible, and could become some of the stars in your collection.

Good Hunting! ©

OBSERVATIONS

BY GIBB GREEN—WINDSOR, CO

WHAT I'VE LEARNED LATELY

Back fresh (sort of) from our FFCA Reunion '96, sitting here in my office in amazing mid-October 90-degree Colorado weather, musing over the fact that our time in Sapulpa was a tremendous learning experience.

The purpose of this piece is to reflect upon some of the nuggets of wisdom gleaned. By the way, it was a wonderful experience to talk to Frankoma collectors from all over the country. What a delightful bunch of folks! (Only one sorehead, and my wife got to drive 800 miles home with him.)

OBSERVATION # 1

There are as many different kinds of Frankoma collections as there are Frankoma collectors!

There are trivet collectors, those that fancy just political mugs, and there are the V-Vase lovers. Many of you really dig the miniatures, some hoarding just the little pitchers, some even just going after the #550 Guernsey or the #555 Eagle. Then there are the Christmas Card seekers. Or maybe you cotton to the Native American, Western and Cowboy stuff. Some like the Art Deco pieces, and some go just for the animals. Maybe your thrill is the "Pot and Puma" mark. Some collect just by color, all Flame or all Sunflower Yellow.

The point of all this is simply—**all collectors are created equal!** Don't ever feel you're less of a Frankomaniac, just because you don't have all the pieces produced before 1938. Or don't feel like a second class citizen if your collection is only a few dozen pieces. And don't put yourself down because your passion is for a series of pieces that's made up of the less expensive. I go after what I like! If, at the time same, it happens to be a good investment, then so be it.

OBSERVATION # 2

Many of us have been wrong about one Frankoma glaze.

We've used the name "Old Gold" to describe a solid, deep yellow (almost egg yoke color) produced from 1934 to 1942. Maybe that *is* the correct title for that color. But the first "Old Gold" was the pre-rutile

Desert Gold of the 1933–1938 era. According to several people I interviewed at the reunion, they confirm that both George Springston and Ted Steeples (long time Frankoma employees) called the Desert Gold "Old Gold," because that was the first name given to it by John and Grace Lee Frank.

OBSERVATION # 3

The glaze called "Gunmetal" has two different looks.

I know of two "Frank Potteries" pieces in Gunmetal. Both are a *dull* silvery black, the color of the barrel of an old musket that's been well polished. I know of three Frankoma pieces in Gunmetal, including the Slave and His Donkey in the Frank home, and a #550 Mini Guernsey in my own collection, that are a *high gloss* silvery black. They are also distinctly different from the highly-iridized (iridescent) Onyx Black of the early years. The iridized Onyx Black has no silver in it.

OBSERVATION # 4

Just because a particular piece isn't in one of the books, or in any of the various factory catalogs, doesn't mean that it isn't Frankoma.

I saw three vases at the reunion that I cannot find in any of the literature. None were numbered, two were marked "Frankoma." By looking at the glaze and the clay, I'm sure all three were made at the Sapulpa factory.

Since the reunion, I've found two vases here in Colorado that are rarities. One, the #63Z, is the Mayan Aztec pillow vase in Prairie Green, made only in 1949, and pictured only in the factory catalog. The other is the unusual #51 vase made only in 1953. This is a luscious Desert Gold and is only pictured in Susan Cox's Book Two, Page 71.

I have been touring antique malls and flea markets and shows for years—and still see new (to me) pieces all the time! I've also spent hours and hours in other folks' homes looking at some of the largest collections in the country. Frankoma produced so much for so long, and made so many experimental pieces, and so many short-run pieces, that you and I may never run out of new discoveries. In fact, I saw my first Zodiac Trivet this week. So don't give up! Keep on hunting!

OBSERVATION #5

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to identifying some of the Frankoma glazes.

Turquoise is one such multi-headed monster. Even the old butterscotchy favorite, Fawn Brown, ranges from very light to a rather intense brown. It depends on how thick the glaze was applied, and how long it was fired, and even the porosity and quality of the batch of clay it came from. There are some incredibly fine lines among the Turquoise, Indian (Peacock) Blue, and the Blue Gray Jade. I have several pieces from the early 1940's that could be any one of these three.

The point here is this—enjoy the piece for its beauty, and don't lose too much sleep over the exact color name. I'm quite sure that if you had five of the most expert of the experts together in one room, there would most likely be major arguments over which was what blue!

OBSERVATION #6

There must be seminars at next year's reunion!

The folks just ate 'em up. They were tremendous mixers and discussion stimulators. Numerous folks asked me to repeat the same schtick (a good Yiddish word) next year. Despite the fact that my seminars this year were booked as "The First and Last Annual Seminar by Gibb Green," I'm about ready to cave. Okay—I'm willing. I'll do it! We must again have that wonderful showcase full of goodies for "Show and Tell."

Thanks to all of you who loaned us your treasures to spice up the exhibit, including Mr. Joseph Taylor himself. Next year, in addition to all the colors, I'd like to display all the various miniatures, especially the #500 series.

OBSERVATION #7

(Us preachers always insist on doing things in sevens!)

Our journal, the Pot & Puma, is absolutely indispensable to all FFCA members!

It not only ties us together, it is a powerful education tool for collectors. Your *Pot & Pumas* are every bit as valuable as any of the books. If you don't have all the back issues, get on the phone to Nancy Littrell today. They not only contain the answers to a lot of your questions, they may some day be great collectors items, too. Unless, of course, you have a copy with my autograph, which of course is worthless. A good number of reunion attenders made me blush by asking me to John Henry their *Pot & Puma*. (Shucks, I ain't never been a quarterback, halfback, fullback, or even a drawback.)

If you have a few spare moments—please drop me a note or call me with your ideas on what you'd like to see in future articles! Right now, I'm researching for my next article on the Mayan-Aztec pattern. ■

THOSE FABULOUS FRANKOMA KIDS

BY MAXINE SADDLER—LIMA, OH



A big **THANK YOU** to Joniece and Frankoma for the special Christmas Ornament featuring those Fabulous Frankoma Kids! These darling little Baby Boomers are all approaching, or have arrived at, that **BIG 50**. What a celebration! They're more prized than the famous Fan Dancer! M-m-m—well—almost.

I saw my first Kids in the home of Tom and Phyllis Bess in 1981. There they were, sitting on a shelf in her dining area. My husband took a picture of them that I treasured, until I found my first #700 Flower Girl in 1985.

From 1985 until 1994, I acquired a total of seven Kids—three #700 Flower Girls, two #701 Garden Girls, and two #702 Garden Boys. My first boy I named John (after John Frank). My first girl I named Margaret, for the lady who owned her. They were happy to have been re-united in the "Saddler Rest Home," and soon a wedding took place. The previous owner, who lived in Dayton, Ohio, even sent a wedding congratulations card. The other girls served as bridesmaids, of course.

In 1994 I persuaded Samuel "Pat" Warner to sell me a #702 boy. He was promptly named Sammy. Later Mr. Warner was persuaded to sell me a darling girl in blue. (Up until then, all were in Prairie Green.) She was named Alice, for the song "Beautiful Alice Blue Gown."

Where have all these Kids been these past fifty years?! You know, they were only produced for a short time. It would be nice to hear from you FFCA members as to (1) how many Kids you have, (2) how and where you found them, and (3) where they live now. It would be HISTORY—GENEALOGY—and REMEMBRANCE!

Joniece's



Joniece tells the stories . . .

Donna writes them down



*1944 Christmas Card
2-1/4" Tall*

*"A miniature representation of the classic lines
that started Frankoma on its way
to becoming a fine art pottery"*

Well, you've been asking for the Christmas Card story for two whole years. It has been postponed and delayed for all kinds of reasons, none of which are worth going into. Suffice it to say—you asked for it, it's finally here.

Merry Christmas!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

FRANKOMA'S VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS CARDS

What we call the "Christmas Cards" began as little pottery Christmas greetings for personal friends. Soon they were also being sent to the Frankoma accounts at Christmas, because so many of the accounts had become our personal friends—much like some of the collectors have become for Donna and me. That's not to say that one is any more important to us than another. But sometimes a set of circumstances brings one couple or person closer to us than another. Just seems to happen that way. Naturally, we'd very much like to be equally familiar and close to all the collectors, and maybe eventually that luxury will come to be.

As far as I know, and I'm pretty sure about this, Frankoma is the only pottery company that made Christmas Cards that were never sold, only given away. That's not to say that others didn't make Christmas greeting miniatures of one kind or another, but if they did, they were for general sales and not personalized as ours were.

According to my research, Chester and Florine Nicodemus, founders of the wonderful Nicodemus Pottery, produced a Christmas ornament one year in the early 1940's that was for sale, but which they also used for their personal Christmas Card. However, it's believed that it was a one-time-only thing, never an on-going series. There is no evidence whatsoever that either potter got the idea from the other, even though both happened to do what they did about the same time.

Let me say here that it was always distasteful to Daddy to have to use the abbreviation "Xmas" for "Christmas," and he only did so when he had no choice because of the small size of a piece. His connotation of an "X" was that it's used to mark something out, almost a negative symbol. As a child, I remember asking him about it. He explained to me how he felt, and I said,

"Daddy! You can change the X-mas into a *cross*-mas!" I was sure I had hit upon a brilliant idea, and one he would happily accept. But he didn't feel right about it, because the cross was related to the Master's death, not His birth. Also, at that time, "Xmas" was still a common, recognized abbreviation for Christmas, accepted without prejudice. However, in the last thirty or so years, we rarely see "Xmas" used, which probably came out of the campaign to "Put the Christ Back in Christmas." That's just a hunch.

Doesn't everyone have a pet peeve? I have a few of my own. Like when I hear someone say, "That guy took up two parking spaces!" And I think—how can anyone waste their breath and energy complaining about having to move down a few spaces to park? What's the big deal?? *Their* pet peeve is the guy who took up two spaces—and *mine* is the person who complains about it!

One of my pet peeves that really sends cold chills up my spine and makes me want to scream is when someone refers to the Franks' pottery Christmas Cards as "ash trays!" If you ever want to see fire in my eyes, go ahead and say those words to me, but be ready to run!



Bottom view of 1944 Christmas Card

Our parents neither one smoked, and both were strongly against it. Calling the Christmas Cards ash trays is a little like serving Christmas dinner on the Christmas Plates. Just because they're round plates doesn't mean they need drumsticks served on them. And just because the Christmas Cards from 1955 on had somewhat of a concave surface doesn't make them ash trays! They were never designed for, nor did they ever pretend to be anything more, or less, than a Christmas greeting from the Franks and their Frankoma family of employees.

Why do I include the employees? Because they were truly a part of our family. In some instances, we were *closer* than family! For instance, Leona Thomas (whom I call my second Mom) came to work at Frankoma in 1944, and she was always there, doing one thing or another. J.C. Taylor and Ted Steeples were like my big brothers. Charlie Watkins came to work prior to W.W.II, and he and his mother Maggie (another long-time employee) helped raise me, taking me home with them on lots of weekends during my childhood years. And the list goes on. Prior to the 1983 fire, I was proud to say we had *more* employees who had been with us ten or more years than there were with *less* than ten years. We spent as much time together, and often more, than we spent with our respective biological families.

On with the main subject. In the early years, the Christmas Cards were often in the Frankoma line first, or were a *miniature replica* of something already in production, and were simply lettered, "THE FRANKS — CHRISTMAS 19—." On the other hand, sometimes it was a piece designed for the sole purpose of being a Christmas Card, then shortly thereafter we'd take the lettering off and put it into the line.

At this point, I'd like to call your attention to something that was quite a pleasant discovery for me. Looking at an overview of the *design progression* of these little Christmas greetings, I believe there is a picture parallel to the *artist's* evolution of thoughts and ideas. You can almost see where Daddy's mind was from year to year. Follow along with me. To wit:

It seems only fitting that the little #556 pitcher be the first Christmas Card in 1944. To me, this is a miniature representation of the classic lines that started Frankoma on its way to becoming a fine art pottery. Look at the photo of it, and you can almost see the curve of the lip of the tall #80 2-qt. pitcher, and that bulbous little bottom of the #835 honey jug, as well as the old #14 Chinese Vase. It seems to me that this little ewer holds within itself those all-so-familiar lines of John Frank's creations.

There's no doubt in my mind that this whole concept of pottery Christmas Cards began as a two-fold concept. (1) As Mother presented in that first little Christmas post card—"Pots O' Luck, Lots O' Cheer"—the making of pottery was not just a "job" to John and Grace Lee. It was a passion, it was a love, it was a complete and total involvement with the creation of a product that was their life's work, which became their very lifestyle and their signature; and (2) it was simply cheaper for them to make

a little pot to say Merry Christmas than to go buy something. Simple? Sure. Just work a few hours overtime after the kids are asleep. The kiln was there, the materials were there, and times were mighty tough. There was more time than there was money. During the war years, 1945 and 1946, there were no Christmas Cards, because even pottery ones were too expensive to make.

When the war ended, it was only natural for the Wagon Wheel to be the first post-war subject in what was to become this on-going series, unbroken until the fire of 1983.

In 1947 it was the miniature Wagon Wheel sugar, and it was followed in 1948 by the Wagon Wheel creamer to match.

For 1949, it came natural that the miniature Mayan-Aztec pitcher be used. After all, those were the two patterns then being produced—and were the symbols of Frankoma's rising recognition at that time.

Now, as to the 1950 piece, it was a simple little round ringed bowl. I haven't a clue as to why this design was chosen for that year. It's so perfectly round, it looks like a piece made on the potters wheel, don't you think? I tend to believe that when it came time to do that year's Christmas Card, Dad probably just went to his potter's wheel for inspiration, and that's what came of it. Or—maybe Mother needed some little "nut cup" favors for a church dinner. This could have been another instance when Daddy's creation of a new piece was the result of Mother's need for some kind of container. It's nice, isn't it?

The 1951 was just a nice little pitcher that I'm sure was the inspiration some years later for one of the honey jugs.

The 1952 is a perfect example of a small replica of an existing piece or pieces. It was a 2-qt. pitcher in the Norman catalog as #87; it was a 50-oz. pitcher in an early 1940's Sapulpa catalog as #91. Donna was at Oklahoma University that year, and a small handful of these were also made with her name on the side, which she gave to a few of her friends and teachers. Needless to say, these are *extremely* scarce. They're not even considered part of the Frankoma Christmas Card series. So if this one is not in your collection, don't think your collection is incomplete. I tell you about this piece so you'll know what you've found if you find it.

And what year was Lazybones introduced? Right. 1953. So we have a miniature Lazybones creamer for this year's Christmas greeting. *I do love that little pitcher!* Just like I love that full-sized Lazybones creamer. I believe I made that pretty clear in the May 1996 issue of the *Pot & Puma*, Page 19.

1954 Donna got married (the first time). Hence, a wedding ring for that year. About that time, the two pansy rings appeared in the line, which also shows you where the artist's mind was in that time frame. Wedding Band, the romantic Pansy Rings, Lazybones. Things were "smoothing out and easing up," becoming more relaxed and happy.

In 1955—ta-dah!!—the hydraulic press enters the picture! From this point on, the Christmas Cards were all

made on the press. The little leaf was used that year in tribute to the beautiful and ever popular larger versions, #225, #226, and #227.

1956 is a four-leafed clover, and the 1957 an arrow-head. Now, you'll notice that the stem on that little clover is concave, which *could* give someone the thought to use it for a cigarette rest. But, in fact, it was the old "design and thickness" factor demanded by the press that necessitated its being so. The 1957 arrowhead actually *was* a little ash tray. (Bah and humbug!) It was then put in the line without the lettering.

1958. That was the time Daddy was getting all excited about his "cork bark" line. One of these days I'll talk more about those pieces, with my opinion of the pros and cons of them. So this was the time that he was putting out that whole series of containers. Thus, 1958 brought us a little chunk of cork bark.

1959. No secret here. This year gave us the lid handle for the Lazybones Baker. If you can recall, the original lid handle was a kind of snake-like curved thing, very difficult to press and work with. So Daddy decided to make a different one, and he came up with this unique and wonderful little handle, which made a splendid little Christmas Card for that year.

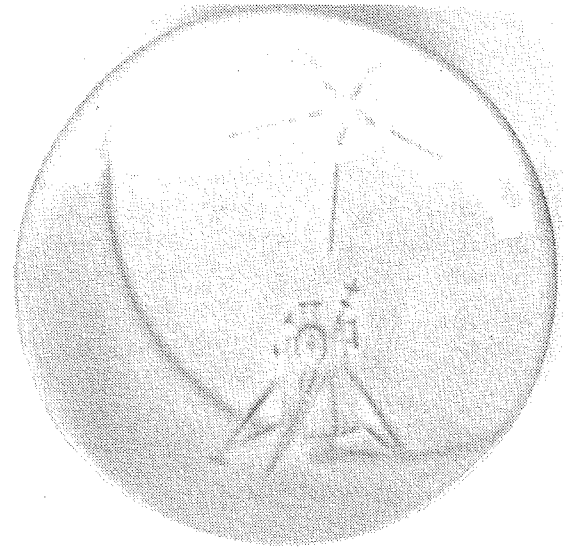
The 1960, 1962, and 1963 Christmas Cards all show a direct influence from the creation of the Polynesian line we made for the Club Trade Winds in Tulsa—a fish and two shells. The 1960 is like the large fish ash tray we made for the Trade Winds. The 1962 was a fan shell, and the 1963 a clam shell. Nestled amongst those three was the 1961 Mayan-Aztec piece. I did that one, which I fashioned after a larger piece I'd made with the Mayan-Aztec motif, which was intended to be an ash tray. But because Daddy so disliked smoking, it ended up a lovelier art piece than it was a good ash tray. (This is very typical of us artists. Try and get used to it.)

Then in 1964, we featured a dogwood blossom. The dogwood was a natural for a Christmas piece, with all of its religious connotations and legends that have been written about it. We do that a lot in this part of the country.

1965 is of course the Christian star, pure and simple, patterned after nothing more than the Christmas Star of Bethlehem (not to minimize its significance).

Look at the 1966, 1967, and 1968, all free form pieces, reflecting once again Daddy's state of mind. Notice that the 1968 was not glazed on the back. Was Daddy trying to tell us something? Was this the forerunner of the Terra Cotta and glazed dinnerware? It wasn't until the late 1980's that I started doing dinnerware with Terra Cotta on the outside and glazed on the inside for Gene McDaniels, our sales rep who covered West Texas and New Mexico. His accounts were going crazy for this look. I fought it all the way because of all the problems I suspected would occur with sustained use. But between my sales manager Wanda Morgan and Gene McDaniels, I succumbed.

The very term "free form" suggests a freeing up, an expanding of one's thoughts and ideas, imagination, free



1969—*The Moon Landing*

dom to follow one's heart. At that point in time, John and Grace Lee were beginning to do some serious traveling. They were out to see the world! As confirmation that that's where Daddy's head was, look at all the free-form pieces he was doing at that time.

At this point there's a break in the story of the Christmas Cards. Up until now, they were usually made in several colors; those that were ready to be glazed on any given day got the color we were glazing that day. Also until now, they had virtually no story to tell, other than a continuous flow of clues to the artist's mind frame. But from this year on—each one was made to represent a particular event of that year, be it state, national, or personal. And from here on, they were all white—except for one of Mother's, which I'll mention later.

1969—a giant step for mankind! Daddy was so fascinated and intrigued when our astronauts landed on the moon. When you think about it, it was indeed the ultimate adventure for all of us who were alive at that time. From traveling by covered wagon to landing on our moon—in less than one lifetime! He felt it was indeed an extraordinary era to be living in.

I was really excited when Daddy came up with the moon landing for the subject of the Christmas Card that year. He did a wonderful job! Look at that very small detail capturing the image of the moon capsule. A mere glance, and you know exactly what it represents. I love the way he incorporated the quarter moon on the side of it. From this point forward, this is the smallest of the Christmas Cards. No rhyme nor reason, it just worked out that way. From here on, they were all done as little miniature "plates"—round or oval. And none of those from 1969 on were ever put into line or used for anything other than Christmas Cards.

1970 was a "Prayer for Peace." We were at war in Viet Nam—or taking part in a "police action"—whatever they'll choose to call it in the history books. It was a call for prayers to bring our sons and brothers back home to us.



1971 Grace Lee and John—"With Our Love"



1973 John Franks—"spiral up to Heaven"

In 1971 Mother and Daddy wanted something very personal, so they chose to use their own profiles. It was the year he was recognized by the President of the United States as the Outstanding Small Businessman in America. They wanted to share this honor with their friends and employees and accounts. So on the front beneath their profiles is "Grace Lee and John" and "1971"; on the back it says "Christmas - With Our Love." It's the only one lettered with these words, making it very personal.

I cannot recall his exact words, but when Dad received the honor in Washington, DC, he expressed in his own unique way (and he said it many times) that there's no such thing as a "self-made" man—the success that had elevated him to this position was accomplished in large measure by the efforts of all the people who had touched his life and helped him along the way.

1972 was the year that he knew he was ill and resigned as President and CEO of Frankoma Pottery. He officially retired, although he didn't stop working. He had already signed over all the Frankoma stock to me two years earlier. So this Christmas Card symbolizes the Franks that were here in Sapulpa. There was Daddy's V-4, my candle vase (my first piece that he put into line), and a vase to represent Mother. That was a vase never made by Mother, but one to represent the artistic flair and flavor of her personality. That vase representing her has a pierced hole in it, which was very typical of her design efforts in the past. She had not yet done the red V-5 Vase that we now use to represent Grace Lee. Understand that Donna had long since flown from the nest to New York, California, and a lot of points between. In no way did we mean to leave her out, but she was not an active part of Frankoma.

1973. Daddy never liked for me to work at night. He could never accept that I'm a "night person" and have always done my best work after the sun goes down. And despite the fact I was a 35-year-old woman, and there was always a night watchman at the plant, he simply didn't want me there after hours. But I was never ever the least bit afraid. After all, both night watchmen, Harvey and Wayman, were my friends, employees for well over twenty years, and they were very protective of me. But those words "ten o'clock" had some mysterious hold on my parents. To them, it was the hour that everyone in the world should be home and getting ready for bed.

So you can imagine my surprise and shock when he called me one evening a little after 9:00 and asked if I would drive over to their house. He said, "Joniece, I have something here I want you to pick up and take to the plant and make a mold of for me." I said, "Tonight?" "Yes," he replied firmly, "**tonight!**" There was an urgency in his voice. So of course I left immediately.

Daddy was sitting in the living room in his big rocker (the one that's still here), and he gave me this handful of clay that had a little design on the top of it. I just stood there. He looked so tired, unwell. His only instruction was, "You know what I want." I nodded a yes, and left for the plant.

I didn't look at it very closely at the time, because I felt that urgency to hurry and get a mold made of what he had given me. When I got to the mold shop, I turned on the light and set it down to look at the design. There was no doubt in my mind that this was Daddy's "spiral up to Heaven." What a perfectly simple statement it was! He had said all that was important to him, and he said it all with one line and a star. I knew exactly what it meant,

but I couldn't think about it at that moment. I couldn't let my overwhelming feelings get in the way, because this couldn't wait. The work had to be done *NOW*.

Here it was only October. His Christmas Card was already done, earlier than ever before. The truth was, we were late every year getting them into the mail, because our first priority was getting the Christmas orders out. Many times the Christmas Cards didn't even get sent until *after* the holidays!

This was a grueling exercise for me in concentrating on work to be done, not necessarily the significance of the work. It was as if he was preparing me then for what the rest of 1973 had in store for me. Don't miss a beat, don't think about the past—just keep your sight set and move on forward. (A reminder to new Frankoma Family members, Daddy died the next month, November 10th.)

Within two weeks after Daddy was gone, I had to host a national sales meeting of some thirty sales representatives, along with their wives. And all those Christmas orders had to get out, too. My father had been my life's teacher, my mentor, my master, my friend. But I could not afford the luxury of pausing to mourn his death. There was no time for that. I had to walk tall and focus on continuing his life's work, which was also my own.

1974. Mother was pretty lost, needless to say, and she wanted to design the Christmas Card. It helped keep her mind busy and off her loneliness. The card shows a lot of her artistic ability which, to this point, had been directed in other avenues. The butterfly is the symbol of rebirth and new life. This not only applied to Daddy, but to the adjustments we were having to make, and the rough roads we were facing without him.

The 1975 card has been called just about everything, including a bell (while holding it upside down), and I don't know what all else. Actually, with this one, I was trying to say, "Hey, world, this is the Year of the Potter!" When Daddy died, he left Frankoma heavily in debt—*far* deeper in debt, in fact, than it was in 1990 when I was having my IRS problems. But by 1975, my plant supervisors and my employees and I had knuckled down, charged full speed ahead, and—we were finally operating *in the black!* I was giving generous bonuses in 1975! So with that year's Christmas Card, I was trying to express—with hands throwing on the potters wheel—that "We did it! This is the Year of the Potter!"

1976. This was the Bicentennial Year, America's 200th birthday. I think it says it all with the United States as a background for the Liberty Bell.

1977 was the year Donna published the first edition of *Clay in the Master's Hands*. So naturally I did a book. Many people look at it and see a Bible, and that's okay, too. Why not? It's Christmas. But for you who now know, that's Donna's book.

In 1978 I used the V-10 Collectors Vase, with an artist's palette to denote the creation of a new color. This new color was used on the V-10. (It was also offered in Coffee—but that's another color, another story, for another time.) The blue was referred to as "Morning Glory

Blue" in the 1978 catalog. Then the same blue—with dark flecks added—was officially introduced in 1979 under the name "Robin Egg Blue."

In 1979 I married Duane Nelson, who was formerly in the candle business. So that year I chose something to represent our marriage. What better than wedding bells and a candle! It was a bit of an "inside story," but I think it's a pretty nice design, and the symbols also double for Christmas bells and candle.

1980 was a time the American people were banding together to bring the hostages home by tying yellow ribbons around trees and things. And here's that "yellow ribbon 'round the old oak tree." This was the beginning of the wearing of different colored ribbons to focus public awareness on national concerns.

It was in 1981 that our space probe gave us those awesome close-ups of the planet Saturn, and Mother designed this one.

1982 was Oklahoma's Golden Jubilee, the 75th anniversary of statehood (1907-1982). So in this one we used the state bird, the Scissortail Flycatcher, with an outline of the state.

Looking for a 1983 Christmas Card? There was no Christmas Card that year, because there was no plant. It had burned that September. Some collectors fill in the gap by including in their collection the little 50th Anniversary commemorative miniature that was given out to everyone at the open house that summer before the fire.

The designing of the 50th Anniversary miniature was one of those instances when I tried to tell a big story, with a whole lot of symbolic pieces, in a very small space, which didn't quite do what I had envisioned and intended. Of course I made it green because green was of such significant importance in Frankoma Pottery's history and success. But for some reason, about 95% of these little pieces didn't turn out to be good representations of Prairie Green. Most of them were under-glazed and/or under-fired, and we had to make do with what we had, as there wasn't time to remake them before the open house. But nobody ever complained. Thank goodness for that, because I thought the color was pretty yucky, and I was really disappointed.

Also, I made the "0" of the "50" a Plainsman plate a part of the composition, which included Daddy's V-4 Vase (his last) and Mother's V-5 Vase (her first), which have come to be universally accepted as representing John and Grace Lee. And then I used the soup cup and a couple of other pieces. It's all right but, as I say, it's one more time I tried to bring symbols and representations together into a unified statement of something-or-other, and it just didn't quite get there. Or at least not to my satisfaction.

That same year, 1983, I did sort of the same thing on that last collector vase, the V-15. I wanted it to stand for Frankoma's "heritage" and "tradition." So I reduced the wonderful #77 Fireside Pitcher to a compatible size and used that, because it was such a classic piece of Daddy's. And then, to try to tie in even more of the "historical," I

took the Wagon Wheel plate and turned it upside down for the base.

Does anyone out there realize that those two pieces were never glued into one piece? Because that lovely pitcher is so perfect in itself, I couldn't bring myself to glue the two together permanently! Believe it or not, I thought it might be feasible to display the base on a plate stand beside the pitcher. Plus, this base has no artist's signature. Instead it is lettered on the bottom "Designed by the Late John Frank." There was no way I could sign the pitcher, taking credit for his creation.

What baffles me is that I've never once been asked by anyone about that piece—why it wasn't glued, in fact those were wagon wheel spokes underneath, if it really was a replica of the #77 Fireside Pitcher, or anything. Although it's apparent that it *is* a reduced replica, it's just kind of interesting that no one has ever commented about it to me in any way—negative, positive, or otherwise.

Concerning the Christmas Cards that Mother made for her and Milton, she started doing those in 1975, the year they were married. That was the "Bird in the Hand." When she did it, I'm quite certain she had no particular symbolism in mind, but I always teased her that Milton was her bird in the hand, and he was better than the one that might have been in the bush.

Grace Lee wanted her own personal Christmas Cards from here on, as opposed to the ones from Frankoma. She wanted them to have their own because, first of all, she wanted the pleasure and satisfaction of designing them herself. And secondly, Milton was not in any way involved with Frankoma. Although there was never a "conflict of interest" between Frankoma and Milton, still it was a new marriage, and she wanted their Christmas greetings to be solely from Grace Lee and Milton Smith.

In 1976 she carried out the US Bicentennial theme with the Liberty Bell. And in 1977, she again used an angel. Grace Lee just loved angels, birds, butterflies, and flowers. Or have you noticed?

For the 1978 Christmas Card, she used the manager scene. Now, Mother and I almost locked horns on this one! I did not want her to have it made in Coffee. I felt it was more appropriate in white. But for whatever reason, she made up her mind to make it in Coffee. You could argue with that lady all you wanted, about any subject in the world; she would listen to you and smile, and in the end, her own brand of logic would still be very much intact, without a scratch or a chip. When her decision was made, she would quietly have her way. So she got her Coffee Christmas Card.

The 1979 is a profile of Jesus as a growing child, with her very familiar "freedom of expression" style (I don't know what else to call it) as a border. She did this in many of her designs with her use of flower petals and leaves. You'll notice that they're not really flowers, and they're not really leaves. But they give the *suggestion* and *impression* of vegetation and blossoms without distracting your eye from the subject. She never wanted you to say, "Oh, look at the pretty flowers." She used the

same approach in her Madonna Plates. You can most definitely see it in this Christmas Card.

In 1980 Grace Lee returns once again to a subject she loves—birds. Note that Frankoma used her 1981 (Saturn), and her 1982 (Oklahoma's statehood). Only the names on the back were different.

1983, no card, no plant. 1984 Mother did one with a pair of lambs looking to the Bethlehem star. Once again she uses her characteristic design around the edge. I think this one, and the year that followed, were two of her best.

In 1985, it was a card very much like her Grace Madonna. And I think this could be beautifully displayed with the Grace Madonna (see last issue cover). You can't miss seeing the similarity of the two. You may also notice that the madonna on the Christmas Card is a little bit more mature, just as mother had matured.

1986 was the 100th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. Without doing the whole statue, only the hand with the torch, it's still instantly recognized as what it is.

1987 shows our national symbol, the eagle, and a scroll with "1787-1987," commemorating the 200th anniversary of the writing of the Constitution of the United States.

Grace Lee's friends all knew how she loved butterflies, and they gave her butterfly gifts in every medium imaginable—from needlepoint to crystal to sweat shirts! So here's another one for the 1988 Christmas Card. Notice that this one is not a true oval. She did the modeling on a dogwood miniature. Now that it's been brought to your attention, you'll recognize the shape.

I should mention here that the 1987 has "Joniece Frank" on the back, and the 1988 says "Joniece." Duane and I had already divorced. And Mother, being the very thoughtful person she was (and a maternal mother hen who loved having me under her wing), insisted that my name be included on their Christmas Cards. Again, once she zeroed in on what she wanted, all the logic in the world was no match for her. So I gave in with little resistance, because it seemed important to her. However, I did not send any to my personal friends, as that was the beginning of the dark years. My mind was not on sending out Christmas Cards. I was utterly consumed with my efforts to save Frankoma.

In 1989, Mother got the idea to do a Christmas ornament. It was round, with a hole at the top, tied with yarn. It featured an angel holding a candle. The reason it was this particular size is that we had just finished doing a decaled Christmas ornament for a Tulsa company, and she took the round blank and worked from that. When she added her design to it, there was a lot of added weight. It was really too heavy to hang on a tree—unless your tree was the one on the White House lawn. But it was the idea that was important, and she hand-tied each one with a piece of yarn. She also sewed little cloth envelopes from scraps of material for this ornament and *some* of the earlier ones. I mention this so that, if you find a Grace Lee card inside one of those little "sacks," you'll know its origin.

That was the last year I was able to produce a Christmas Card for Mother and Milton. During that year, 1989, I sadly saw the writing on the wall and began trying to sell Frankoma to keep it going. By April of 1990, the IRS had come in, and we operated for the next year under a Chapter 11. So naturally it was impossible to get a card done that year. The following April, 1991, Mr. Bernstein acquired Frankoma.

After 1989, Mother designed colored post cards for Christmas greetings and wrote a little verse on them. These were sent just to their personal friends.

I've been asked many times why there were no more Christmas Cards after the fire. We still made them for Mother and Milton, but none for Frankoma.

Let me explain where I was at that time, in hopes you'll better understand why I had to discontinue what had become an established tradition.

Our accounts and customers were so very wonderful to us after our tragedy. They sent us orders and wrote on them, "Ship when you can." Or "My order is waiting for you as soon as you are back in production." So when we did get back into production, we had six months to a year's worth of orders on hand to start with.

Of course the shipping of orders was first and foremost in our minds. But there was a financial situation that had to be recognized and dealt with. We had good insurance money, and Ted, J.C., and I were determined *not* to borrow extra money to get back into business. But we had to. You'd think after all the years of knowledge and experience that together the three of us had, along with all our employees, we could just go like Gang Busters and be in production overnight, once the facility was up. However, this was not the case.

FYI, Daddy had himself built all the first kilns, and Ted had built all the ones after that. But in order to expedite our getting back into production, we bought a new kiln from a commercial kiln company, to replace one of the two that had to be torn down—which was an utter *disaster!* Unbelievable as it was, the engineers from that company had no idea in the world how to fire a kiln. That fact became painfully apparent at the first firing when the kiln regulators totally melted down! Ted had to take the time to go in and redesign more than half of this expensive "state of the art" ceramic kiln! Book knowledge is important, but this is one more of many things confirming my belief that *nothing can beat hands-on experience!*

During that almost-a-year that we were down, the quality of the available materials had changed—and some had been dropped from the market altogether because of the lack of demand. We ended up having to do a *lot* of substituting in formulating our glazes. And there were *many* times more seconds produced than firsts!

To cut to the chase—we were living in a horrendous *nightmare!* If you can imagine trying to make your weekly payroll, while paying penalties and taxes to the government all the while you're shut down—regardless of the reason—and paying all the added operating expenses for over four months, with no cash flow, you might say we

got off to a rough and rocky start. Plus—there were 17 people who worked continuously, never missing a single payroll check, during our clean up and rebuilding.

It was a hard and painful decision for me not to make a Christmas Card for Frankoma in 1984, but I had to bite the bullet and break the tradition. It seemed like a good time to be realistic and call a halt until things were looking better, if and when. As you know, things didn't get better. The Christmas Cards were never again made. And then there were none.

As to how many were made, there's no specific number I can give you. But I can give you a *reasonable, educated guess*. So don't write any of these numbers in stone, because they're only my best *estimates*. I'd say that from 1944 through 1949, no more than 100–150 were made each year; 1950 (the year we built the new showroom) through 1953 perhaps 500; in 1954 and 1955, there were probably around 1,000; 1956 through 1960, 2,500; and 1970 through 1977 we were up to about 5,000 each year.

By 1978 business was great, and Frankoma was expanding. We were six months behind in orders. So this was the time we had to start being more selective about who we accepted as accounts, because it was hard to take care of the business we had. We also had to cut back on who got Christmas Cards. So 1978 through 1982, the total made was no more than about 3,500.

As to Grace Lee & Milton's: In 1975 and 1976, around 200 were made; 1977 through 1979, about 250; and 1980 through 1982, no more than 350. None in 1983. 1984 through 1988, around 375; and in 1989, about 300.

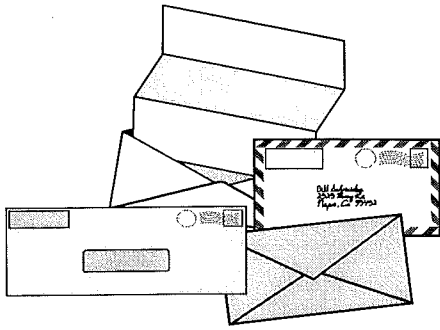
We sincerely hope you collectors, especially the new members of our Frankoma Family, will have great fun searching for all of these unique little holiday greetings that were never sold, but always given as gifts of love and gratitude to faithful friends and customer accounts. Some were excellent little pieces of art. Some were simply representations of what was happening at the time, a few not all that aesthetically great. But consider the spirit in which they were given, which they still carry with them, and that alone makes them all equally special.

Someone asked me what I would design for 1996—if I were still making pottery Christmas Cards. I had only to think about it for a moment.

I would feature the Pot & Puma logo of the Frankoma Family Collectors Association, that rapidly growing entity so lovingly dedicated to the appreciation, preservation, and promotion of Frankoma Pottery as a collectible. And you may be sure it would be carrying with it an abundance of profound sentiments of appreciation, gratitude, and affection to each and every one of you from Joniece and Donna Frank. ♣

A Very Merry Christmas to you all!

Because we thought this would be the most appropriate subject for Christmas, your other questions and subjects you've asked us to write about will be included in the next issue(s). Keep your questions and requests coming. You're not forgotten!



Mail Call

I was excited to find the following letter that surfaced from an old box of files, and of course I wrote to the gentleman right away. What a nice addition to our membership he would be!

July 28, 1989

To Whom It May Concern...

As a child I recall eating endless amounts of soup, stew, and chili from the "Plainsman" bowls. After several years of serious Frankoma Pottery collecting, I begged my mother to give me the last two remaining bowls, which started as a set of four. I told her that they will be well taken care of, that they would be placed next to other cherished pieces, enshrined to be admired, that they were perfect examples of one of America's most enduring potteries. But she told me to get lost, that my grandmother had given them to her in the 1950's.

My collecting experience has had many highlights. Just today I acquired my first collector bottle vase, the V-14. Unfortunately, I have not found any pieces with the "Pacing Leopard" mark, but the search continues.

As an appraiser of antiques and collectibles, I was appointed a contributing editor to the *Appraisers National Association Newsletter*. I have written several articles about Frankoma Pottery, and have even gotten a few individuals to appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of the pottery. Not too much is written about Frankoma in our antique trade papers out here on the West Coast, so I wrote the articles to give credit where credit is due.

Within the next year, my wife and I are planning a trip to Frankoma. We would like to inquire about the following: Is there a museum? If so, what are the hours, and are there tours? Is there a gift shop? If so, are the older, scarcer pieces available for sale? Is there a tour through the factory?

We would also be interested in obtaining catalogs and would like to be able to purchase a copy of Donna's book *Clay in the Master's Hands*. I sincerely hope that Grace Lee and Joniece get an opportunity to read this letter, and my wife and I would like to thank them both for their hard work and dedication, and to continue on with the most unique pottery that could only belong to Frankoma.

Jose from CA

We don't yet know if he did indeed make that trip from CA to OK, but Jose now has our information package, along with a current copy of Clay. Stay tuned to your P&P for further news of Jose from CA! Film at 11:00!

Dear FFCA...

Enjoyed the article by Jay Borchert. Someone "up north" is collecting Frankoma. We *used* to have a store right in River Falls that sold it. We used to get a catalog after our store quit selling it. Now I don't know why we quit getting a catalog. Maybe we didn't buy enough, or maybe there isn't a catalog anymore?

Hope you had a great reunion. Maybe I can make it in '97. Can a person buy this year's reunion piece? How?

Marge from WI

Marge, look in your last issue (summer) of the Pot & Puma for prices and ordering info on the commemorative, as well as the Christmas Ornament. Or call Nancy at 405-722-2941, tell her what you want, and charge it. For your convenience, we now take MasterCard and Visa! Hooray! As to current Frankoma catalogs, just call them at 1-800-331-3650 and ask to be sent one.

Dear Mr. Warner...

Being a new member, and this being the first time to place a "wanted," I'm writing you today for some assistance on the "how to"! First, please allow me to explain that after receiving my *Pot & Puma* issue, Vol. 2, No. 3, I was truly overwhelmed. I could not believe there was the article on "Ten Little Greyhounds" (by Maxine Saddler).

You see, I have adopted two retired greyhounds, and since then I have been actively looking for ceramic (or whatever) items depicting the body form of greyhounds. I've seen lots of whippets, but rarely greyhounds. So now to find Frankoma manufactured these lovely creatures (180 of them as was stated), I'm in heaven!!! Hence my writing to place a "want ad" for these greyhound pieces. Of course, if there

is a cost to place the ad, please let me know and I will certainly pay it!

Irene of TX

How nice to hear from you, Irene! I'll bet you'll get results from your ad (no charge to members). I just saw one in Brown Satin. We know they're out there!

Dear Ray and Elaine...

Every Frankoma collector owes you a great debt of gratitude for being at the rudder as the club birthed and learned to walk. You cultivated the clods and got beyond the personalities to work for the common good (of FFCA). You'll probably never get the accolades you deserve.

Thanks and God bless,

Anonymous

Dear Joniece and Donna...

Tom and I want to thank you for welcoming us into the Frankoma Family.

Tom started collecting Frankoma about five years ago. I never shared his enthusiasm, because my first love is the Victorian era. My entire house is Victorian except for the finished basement. That's where Tom has his collection of Frankoma Pottery. Once in a while he would find a piece that I liked, but I never really paid much attention to it.

Being a good wife, I agreed to make the trip to Oklahoma in September to go to the convention, because he was so excited about it. I had never been to Oklahoma, so I figured I would enjoy the trip anyway.

Little did I know that that weekend would alter aspects of my life.

First there was the tour of the factory (very impressive), then the business meeting, then a couple of seminars where I learned about colors, glazes, and other things about Frankoma that I didn't know (very informative). Then it was time to take the tour of the Frank home. Big deal—you've seen one house, you've seen them all (unless of course it's a 19th century Victorian mansion). Besides, I wouldn't feel comfortable traipsing through someone's home and invading their privacy.

We almost skipped the tour, but we read the little book about the house. We found out this was something out of the ordinary—something not to be missed. So we went, and we were totally in awe (*WHO KNEW?!).*

As impressed as we were with the house, it was what happened inside the home that impressed us the most. Tom was so thrilled to be in John Frank's home with the two of you, that I knew we

couldn't leave without a picture of him with you both. When I asked if you would pose for a picture, you didn't hesitate. You placed your father's first piece of art pottery into Tom's hands, and then you handed me the vase he made for Grace Lee as an engagement present. These are priceless items that we've only seen in books, and we were holding them in our hands and taking pictures! You made us feel so welcome. We felt as if we were long lost members of your family who had finally found their way home.

The dinner that evening and the auction that followed were wonderful. I bought my first piece of Frankoma at the auction—the 1972 V-4 limited edition vase.

At SHOW & SELL the next day Tom found his 1965 Christmas Plate, and I found two more pieces for myself. (I also bought out the factory!) But what really changed my entire attitude was my final purchase. I bought *Clay in the Master's Hands*, mainly to have it signed as a keepsake for Tom. However, I went back to our motor home and started reading it. I didn't put it down until I was finished reading it in the early morning hours.

I was so impressed, so touched by this man John Frank, who could simply put his life in God's hands and never question His decisions. His faith, his generosity, his love was so genuine. I couldn't help but be changed by him. I loved his sense of humor, too. It made me wish I had known him.

When we came home, I looked at all of Tom's Frankoma with new eyes. I picked up every piece and caressed it and felt the vibrations and the love in each one. I now have a new respect for his pottery—and I have a display of my own favorite pieces.

I'm sending you the pictures that we took in your home so you will remember who's writing this letter. I think they turned out well.

Donna—you asked Tom to write the story of how he got started collecting Frankoma, so here it is.

Thank you for writing such a touching, insightful book about your father.

Most of all, thank you both for making us feel like family, and for making this reunion such a memorable experience. We can't seem to stop talking about it, and we can't wait until next year so we can do it all over again. God bless you.

Carol and Tom from MI

You positively whelm us, Tom and Carol. We sincerely feel we have the nicest, warmest, funest, most appreciative group of collectors in the entire world. We appreciate you so much. Next year? It's a date!

"It's a FRANKOMA !?!"

BY TOM CRUMET—NILES, MI

My wife and I were in the habit of going to one particular auction house every Friday night. One Friday evening, my sister and her husband Jim decided to join us and learn what the attraction was all about.

As the evening wore on, the auctioneer held up a lonely coffee mug. He described it as having a roadrunner on it. As I have a soft spot in my heart for roadrunners, I was considering making a bid. It was then that the auctioneer turned the mug over and stated that it was a "Frankoma."

We're from Michigan and, unlike you Oklahomans, we didn't grow up with Frankoma. In fact, *we had never heard of it!*

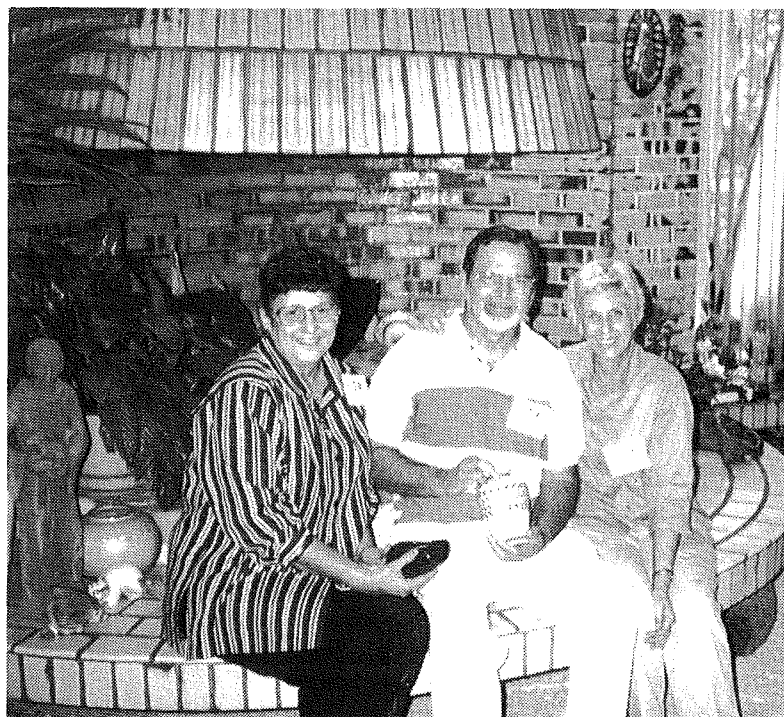
About that time my brother-in-law said, "Oooh, now you *have* to bid on it—*it's a FRANKOMA!*" So I did. I bid a dollar, and I got it. My

first piece of Frankoma.

A few months later, Jim appeared on our doorstep with a present wrapped in tissue paper. It was a little green vase shaped like a snail. He had bought it as a joke because it said "Frankoma" on the bottom. He said, "Now you can add this to your collection of Frankoma Pottery."

Little did he know how true those words would come to be! Because I grew to love that pottery. I now have a collection of over 500 pieces of Frankoma—and that's just the beginning! Now whenever Jim comes over to visit, he just shakes his head, and says, "Egad! I created a monster!"

My wife Carol and I joined the Frankoma Family and attended our first meeting in Oklahoma this September (1996). We had a wonderful time! And we know it was the first of many more to come. ■



Joniece Frank, Tom Crumet and Donna Frank

Grace Lee, My Friend

BY DOROTHY GIBSON—SAPULPA, OK

(As Told to Donna)



finally joined the club! I may not be the biggest collector of Frankoma, but I may have been one of the first to love it and collect it.

Grace Lee and John came to Sapulpa in 1938. My husband Cecil and I, with our five-year-old son, arrived in 1943. Cecil had been hired to manage the local lumber company, and until we found a place to live, we stayed for a week at the Lorraine Hotel (which burned many years ago). During that week, our first priority was to find a house, but my second was to get to Frankoma Pottery to buy a Wagon Wheel Vase. I had seen one in the home of a friend in Pawhuska, and I was determined to own one!

We walked into the showroom (the old "Bucket of Blood" on Route 66) where the Franks worked and lived, and we introduced ourselves. After only minutes of conversation, Grace Lee said, "I feel like a sister has just come to town!" We were instant friends.

"You must meet my husband John!" she said, and she called him in from the plant. In a few minutes, here he came, slapping his trousers, making a cloud of clay dust. His hands, face and hair were all powdery with gray dust, just like his clothes. But he had a big smile on his face, and his hand was out to welcome us to Sapulpa.

Grace Lee's birthday was September 4, and mine is September 11, so for many years we celebrated our birthdays together. Our son and Joniece were born only a day apart, so they celebrated their birthdays together, too. Our families went to the same church, and we attended many functions together over those many years. After John was gone, we took one trip abroad with Grace Lee, and later two with her and Milton with church groups. Together we saw India and Nepal, South Africa, and the Holy Land. With Grace Lee as a traveling companion, I never got homesick, lost, or insecure. Unlike me, she always seemed to know where to go, and how to get back to the hotel.

For fifty-three years, Grace Lee remained my closest friend. Wherever she and John traveled, she was thoughtful enough to bring me back something. She would say, "I couldn't resist this, Dorothy. It looks just like you." My house is filled with little birds, animals, madonnas, and other things she gave me that are so dear to me I cannot bear to part with them.

However, I think the greatest thing Grace Lee ever gave me was encouragement, and the confidence to believe that I had at least *some* artistic talent. I was very shy to try anything for the first time. But she told me that *everyone* is capable of doing artistic things—or at least doing things in an artistic way. I thought a lot about that, and it gave me the courage to try things that, until then, I had only "wished" I could do. And she always praised whatever I did.



I began taking painting lessons, and I've been painting for thirty years. I've done some rather nice oil canvasses, and I can say I'm proud of them. She also taught me to exercise my "taste" in art, to dare to trust my feelings about what I saw. By her example, I learned the difference between gaudy and elegant, between "too much" and "just right." Our tastes were not always alike.

But I learned from her that one doesn't have to be a great artist to recognize and appreciate fine art, and an object doesn't have to be expensive to have value. It sometimes just needs someone to love it to make it special. Just like she loved me, and I came to feel special.

Yes, I bought a lot of Frankoma during those many years of friendship with Grace Lee and John, and much of it was given to me by them at Christmas and for birthdays. But I have many things that aren't Frankoma, too. My home is filled with wonderful treasures I might never have purchased—or myself created—things I might never have enjoyed living with all these years, had it not been for Grace Lee bringing out the "art" in me. She was able to see in me things I never knew were there. She so enriched my life. And I'll always love her for that. ♪

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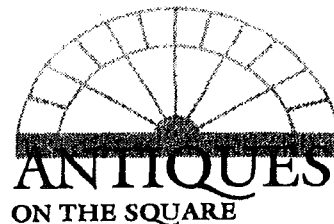
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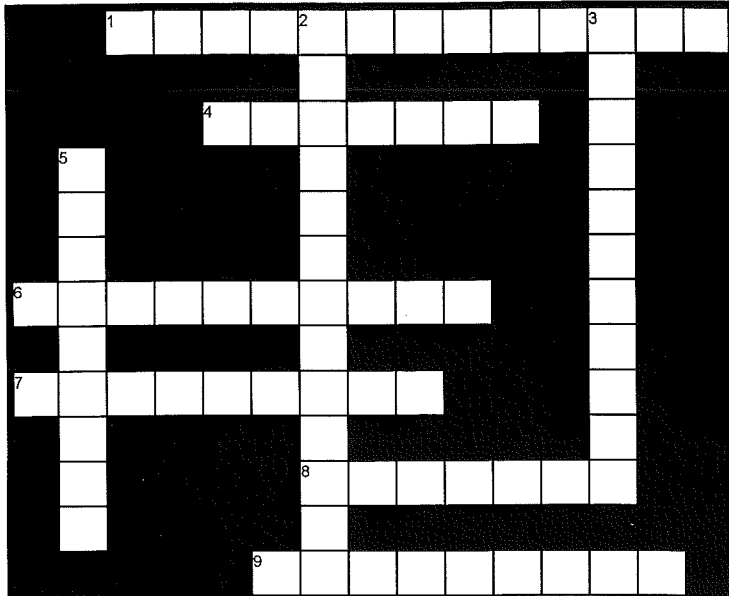
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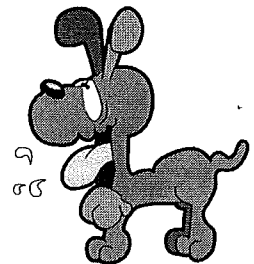
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7. #122 by J. Taylor
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