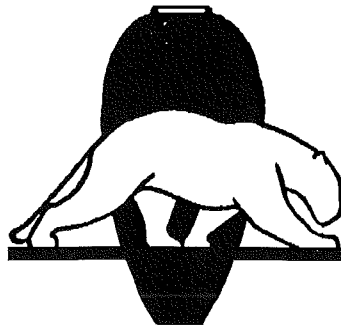
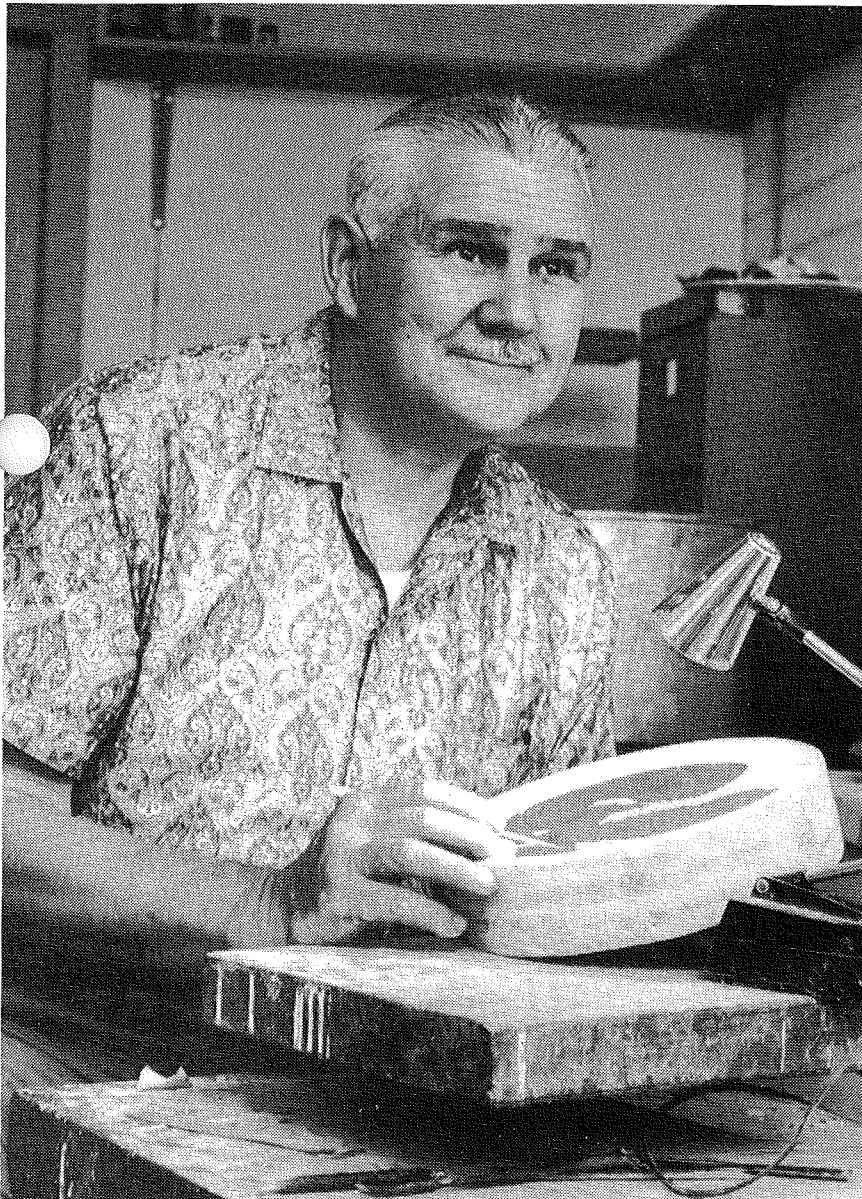


\$5.00



Pot & Puma

Published by the Frankoma Family Collectors Association



Cornelius Photocraft of Tulsa, OK

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

BERT HUDDLESTON

As I begin my term as President of the Frankoma Family Collectors Association, I want to thank you for your vote of confidence. I am grateful for the honor.

I'm very much looking forward to doing all I can to continue to take our association in the direction it has been going from the very beginning. From all that we're hearing, we're possibly the fastest-growing organization of its kind in the country today. That's exciting!

From our very first meeting, I felt confident that FFCA was headed for greatness. And if there was ever a doubt in the minds of our Family members, surely it's gone by now. Just look what we've accomplished, and how we are quickly spreading out to virtually every state. Being on the Internet, plus having those wonderful two and three pages in *The Antique Weekly* and *The Antique Trader*—our name is certainly getting around. This kind of positive publicity is bringing in new collector members every time we go to the post office or check our e-mail! And our publication staff continues to bring us publications of top quality, with authoritative and interesting articles that inform, entertain, and educate us about our Frankoma collections that we love—one of the greatest attractions for collectors to join us.

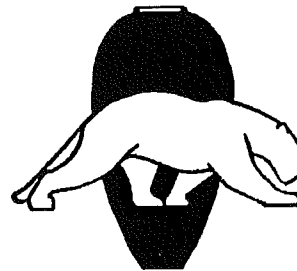
I personally appreciate the fact that our Board of Directors and Trustees stand together as one and work in such harmony as I've never before experienced. After all, we're not running a business—we're planning and promoting *enjoyment* for our members, and we love doing it. For the few who take it so seriously and stir up such dust, we regret that they've lost sight of the fun it was designed to generate.

Speaking of fun, I hope you're all making plans to attend Reunion 97, September 12-13. It's always such a pleasure to meet our new Family members, as well as those friends who faithfully keep returning. We've studied last year's helpful suggestions, for which we're grateful, and we'll use all we can.

As your new President, I pledge to do all I can to make our Frankoma Family grow and prosper. We would hope that the friendship and family atmosphere our members enjoy will always be one of the most important things that FFCA is known for from coast to coast.

We are very proud that our auctions the last two years have made it possible for us to offer this year not one, but *three* ceramic scholarships to deserving students. Those will be chosen by our Scholarship Committee the last week in March, and awarded the first week in April. We will announce to you the results of the competition in the next issue.

If I can ever help answer a question, or if I can just share in some of your great finds, please write to me. I'll always respond. My address is 600 S. 3rd Street, Tonkawa, OK 74653. Thank you again for allowing me to serve FFCA. ■



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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 these members for helping us to enrich our issue with these photos.

About the Cover Photo:

Sapulpa, OK
Frankoma Pottery
John's Studio, 1967

John Frank at work on 1967 Christmas plate.

Photograph from the
Frank Family Collection

Photography by

Cornelius Photocraft of Tulsa, OK

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PHOTOGRAPHY, Phyllis Bess, Steve Littrell
BUSINESS MANAGER, Steve Littrell

Winter Issue. The *Pot & Puma* is published quarterly. Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn by the Frankoma Family Collectors Association, 1300 Luker Lane, Sapulpa, OK 74066-6024. Third Class postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FFCA, PO Box 32571, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-0771.

Membership: \$25 (family) One year. Membership includes subscriptions to the *Pot & Puma* and the *Prairie Green Sheet*. Back issues of the *Pot & Puma* are available, \$5 per issue, postage paid. To order, write FFCA, PO Box 32571, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-0771.

Editorial correspondence: *Pot & Puma*, 1300 Luker Lane, Sapulpa, OK 74066-6024.

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FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

BILL HOLLOWAY

Having collected American art pottery for years, Frankoma being part of that quest, I now find myself in a position to assist in the direction of what has become the fastest growing association within that broad, multifaceted, overall hobby of collecting arts and crafts. I use "arts and crafts" in the broad, generic sense here, not to be confused with plywood wedges painted like watermelon slices, nor the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts Movement ala Ruskin, Morris, Stickley, Roycroft, etc.—although that is also one of my passions!

The growth of FFCA has been phenomenal, meteoric. The club is now represented with members in most states; we have had two wildly successful "Family reunions" with spirited showing, selling, buying, and auctioning of Frankoma, old and new; the *Pot and Puma* is one of the best written and best edited journals in all of Collectordom; the *Prairie Green Sheet* offers buying and selling opportunities; and we are now on the verge of awarding three \$1,000 scholarships to deserving college juniors or seniors pursuing careers in the art world. And all this for a price less than you and your #1 spend for a dinner at your favorite tablecloth restaurant!

Collecting Frankoma is an adrenaline-pumping hobby. You can second-mortgage your house for the likes of a Harlem Hooper or a Torch Singer, or have an interesting, but less costly, collection of Christmas Cards, Trivets, and/or Political Mugs. It's whatever your pocketbook and your interests allow!

We (those of us in past and present roles of leadership) have also made mistakes along with our successes. In FFCA's fast growth curve, we—most of whom are amateurs at running anything like an organization with nearly 600 memberships and an annual national convention—have upset a few people who think things should be different. We beg forgiveness for all of our shortcomings, and ask that differences be put behind us once and for all, and not be allowed to fester and divide.

This is a club, not the United Nations. And although I realize that a few make a living buying and selling, for most of us, this is a HOBBY! "Hobby," according to the Holloway dictionary, is an activity to be enjoyed and to be shared with other kindred souls. "Lighten up and have fun" should be our motto. We'll get better at this as we go along. After all, the Wright Brothers didn't build a 747 in 1903.

So keep them cards and letters comin'! I'll answer anyone who writes. And if I don't have the answers, I'll find them for you. *Good hunting!* ■

FROM THE SECRETARY

DONNA FRANK

Well, cousins, your secretary has finally been thrust headlong into the 21st Century! A brand new computer system has arrived at my office, and FFCA is now up to speed with the rest of the planet—and perhaps the galaxy. Comparing the new with my old is sort of life comparing a Rolls Royce to a bicycle. Wowee. So many bells and whistles—so little time.

So now you net surfers can contact me at ffca4donna@aol.com and Nancy is at ffca4nancy@aol.com. Any of you who would like to be on the Frankoma Chat Line, just e-mail Nancy your online address, and she'll put your name on the list of the one she's about to create. We already have 15 members online and ready to chat!

By the way, very soon now we'll be dispensing with the membership card that has to be renewed every year. Most of you will be receiving a nifty permanent card. This will free Nancy and me from spending so much time every month doing renewal letters and making and sending out new cards, leaving us free to do all those must-do-now things that can rob us of our needed beauty sleep.

At the January 20th board meeting, we began our Reunion 97 planning. Several suggestions were thrown out for this year's commemorative. But someone came up with an idea that swiftly put all the others in the recycle bin. Want to know what it is? Of course you do! But for now, it shall remain a guarded secret. The truth is, folks, we first have to find out IF it can be done—and then HOW. Trust us. Have you been disappointed so far? You're gonna love 'em!

By now, you should all know our Historian, Maxine Saddler. You've read enough of her articles to know that she's our **Grand Dame of Frankoma Lovers**. If you're ever asked to give a program on Frankoma at your church or club, call or write to her for the best advice and suggestions. She's given dozens and dozens of them! In February, she gave a program to a group of young mothers. She filled two baskets with gift wrapped little pieces of Frankoma and gave them as door prizes. Were they excited! Maxine says, "I felt that maybe when these young mothers get out of that tied-down stage, they'll run into some Frankoma and recognize it—and start looking for more!" She's at 735 Ewing Ave., Lima, OH 45801, 419-228-3507. ■

ARTIST RAY MURRAY HAS GIVEN THE WORLD A LEGACY OF FINE ART

It has just been learned that artist Ray Murray passed away in December. Mr. Murray was one of the first employees of Frank Potteries in Norman, Oklahoma, and contributed several pieces to its first line. Murray later went to work for Bauer Pottery and created innumerable pieces for their extensive line of artware over many years.

Murray had lived in Honolulu, Hawaii, for the past thirty-five years, and it was not until last summer that we learned of his whereabouts and established contact with him. He was able to confirm that he was the artist who created not only the Indian Chief, but also the Oriental Masks, and others he could not recall at the time.

According to Murray, he was never paid for the pieces he created for the fledgling company. "I just wanted to help John get his business started, and we needed some pieces to get into production," he said. "When I finished school, John said he had an opening at his little factory, and Prof. Jacobson recommended me. I had no intention of being a potter when I took the job," he told us in a letter. "But after a year or so, the die was cast, and I was hooked. I've been associated with

ceramics and/or products designing every since. Even today I'm involved in a ceramic project. John Frank was a good friend about whom I have only the most pleasant memories."

Gary Schaum speculates that the rare Hound Dog, among others, can most likely also be credited to Murray, and other early pieces are being carefully studied for the same possibility.

Ray Murray was in his late eighties when he died.

FFCA regrets that we had so little communication with this noted artist before he left us. Our profound sympathy and condolences go to his wife, children and grandchildren. ■

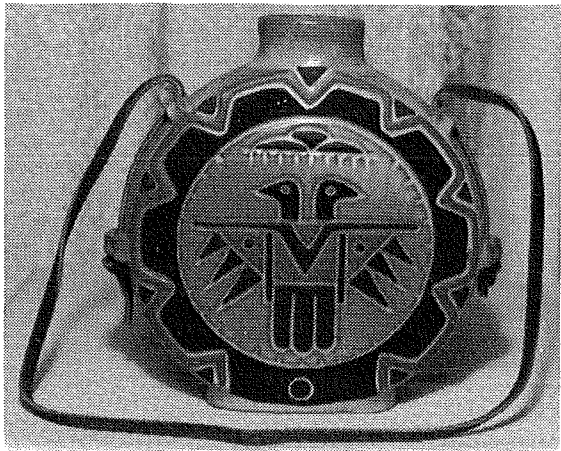
IN REMEMBRANCE

Mrs. Mima A. Warner, mother of Mr. Pat Warner, passed away in her sleep on the morning of February 20th at her residence in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Mrs. Warner celebrated her 100th birthday last August 30th.

Cremation took place in Arkansas, and services for Mrs. Warner were held at Memorial Park Cemetery in Oklahoma City on March 8th.

The membership joins the Frankoma Family Collectors Association of officers and trustee in expressing their heartfelt sympathy and condolences to Mr. and Mrs. Pat Warner, their children and grandchildren. ☩

Show & Tell Us



*#59 Thunderbird Canteen, handpainted
6 1/2" Tall—1942-1988*

BY MAXINE SADDLER—LIMA, OH

You're familiar with the hymn, *Amazing Grace*. A line of that song goes, "I once was lost, but now am found."

I would like to SHOW AND TELL you about the #59 Canteen that was lost. I found my first one at a garage sale in the familiar Prairie Green. I paid \$5 for it—not bad. This is a familiar piece, designed to hold water, though I'll wager very few of them were ever used for that.

Most important is the design. It depicts a double-headed Thunder Bird in the center, surrounded by a beautiful Indian motif, and usually with a leather thong to hang it. Years ago I decided to search for the Thunder Bird Canteen in as many colors as I could find. I've found them priced from 50 cents to \$5, and one I even paid \$10 for. I now have them in White Sand, Prairie Green, Desert Gold, Brown Satin, Red Bud, Turquoise and multi-colored.

The Canteen was produced from 1942-1983, so you can imagine there are many to be found. For a new collector, this should be an easy challenge, and usually priced so anyone can afford it. You can find them in both Ada and Sugar Loaf Hill (Sapulpa) clays, and in most glazes covering the 40-year period. The Thunder Bird Canteen is now discontinued, and bound to become more valuable as the years go by.

One I have was found at a flea market in Indiana. As I approached the booth, I noticed an old Canteen in Turquoise. The dealer saw that light in my eyes and figured, "Boy, here's a sure sale!" He showed it to me and said, "This is very nice, lady, made in Colorado by an Indian!" I did purchase the Canteen, of course, but didn't bother to tell him that his Colorado Indian story was a bit off.

Through the years, people have thought they could improve or enhance a certain piece. No doubt you've seen the Indian Chief whose feathers are many-colored.

Well, my SHOW AND TELL is about a #59 Canteen I found in Mansfield, Ohio. It had been painted, but really a nice job. I wish you could see it in full color, because it's very attractive.

Now go out and start looking for your #59 Thunder Bird Canteens! You're bound to fall in love with them. ■

My Robin Egg Blue #385 Puppy Bank

BY KOMA GAL—CORONA, CA

Show and Tell Us—Thanks, Maxine, for this great idea!

Koma Kid and I would like to share with the Family one of our pieces. It's not an especially rare one, but could be a little hard to find. He's not the Champion Collie, nor is he the Grand Irish Setter—actually just a loveable little mutt.

Ten years ago this past September, we went treasure hunting in Redlands, California. We were wandering through the Antique Exchange Mall Annex when we came upon the most adorable little Robin Egg Blue #385 Puppy Bank! Just 7-1/2" tall, there he was sitting on the floor next to a table leg waiting patiently for the right people to come along and claim him.

Well, it was puppy love at first sight with this little stray pup! There was absolutely no question that he was ours, and that he was going home with us that night. His "fee" was only \$14.

When we got home, he moved into our bedroom and immediately found his place at the end of the dresser. And ever since then, when the grandchildren visit, they delight in feeding our "Blue Bowser" with pennies and nickels and dimes. After the kids leave, we sometimes find that they've sneakily given him a special treat—M&M's! ■



*#385 Dog Bank in Robin Egg Blue
7 1/2" Tall—1980-1982*

NEW!

Frankoma Reference Book

BY GARY SCHAUM

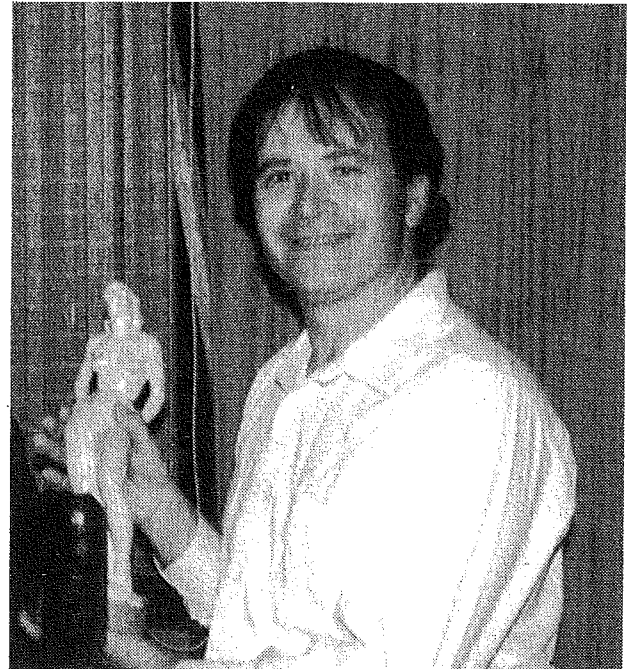
It was back during Reunion 95, the one at the fair grounds. Gary returned home one evening to find a message on his answering machine from a book publisher in Indiana. He called them back the next day to learn that they were interested in his writing a book about Frankoma Pottery, saying that Gary had come highly recommended by an anonymous someone as a viable authority on the subject.

After some negotiations, Gary began work on it, and now, a year and a half later, it's on its way to be printed. Publication date has not yet been set, but according to Gary, it will probably be sometime in mid-summer of this year.

The new publication, yet untitled and unpriced, will be a definitive book on Frankoma from the beginnings of *Frank Potteries* in 1933 to 1991. Also included are works by John Frank when he was teaching at the University of Oklahoma from 1927, before he and Grace Lee went into business for themselves.

A quick reference for collectors, all items will be listed in order of mold number, and will include a description of the item, the year(s) it was produced, the color of the actual item shown, the artist (if known), and the approximate current value. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for identifying, as well as a guide for buying and selling.

As some of you more serious (and often frustrated) Frankomaniacs are aware of, not all of those early pieces were assigned numbers. In these cases, because Gary feels strongly that every piece needs,



*Gary Schaum with a Rare Find,
The #126 Torch Singer*

and should have, a reference number for identification and cataloging purposes, each unnumbered piece has now been assigned one by Gary himself—in every case a number never before used in the Frankoma line, and one that he deems to be a logical choice, had John Frank given it one.

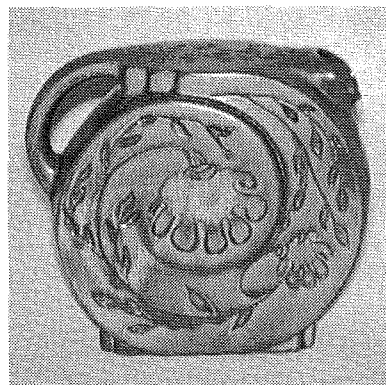
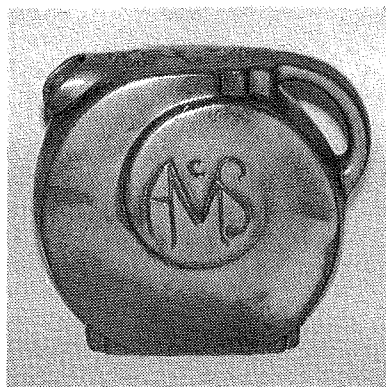
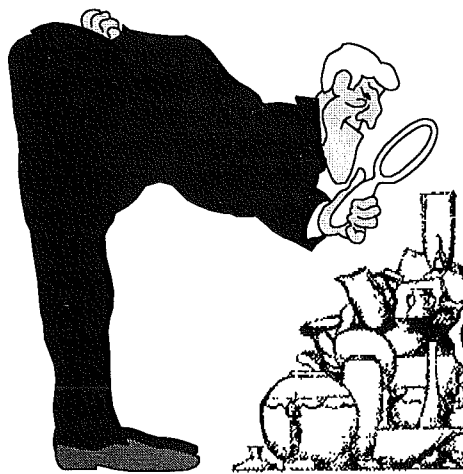
Items will also be categorized according to vases, dinnerware, sculpture, miniatures, etc. Also included will be a comparable listing and photographs of the complete Gracetone line.

It is anticipated that this book will offer collectors comprehensive and up to date information on Frankoma and Gracetone, showing photos of extremely rare items that have never before been photographed and published in a reference book. Some examples are the early Hippo (1930's), the Oklahoma Teepee Bookends, the Wiley Post Plaque, the Will Rogers figurine, Deco Nude Bookends, and several other surprises.

If you don't know Gary Schaum, be sure to introduce yourself to him at the next reunion in September. He lives in the town of Mounds, just south of Sapulpa, has been collecting Frankoma for some 27 years, serves as an FFCA Trustee, and is a horticulturist by trade. Nobody grows plants and flowers like Gary. And few can surpass him in his love of, and experiential knowledge of, collecting Frankoma!

As soon as his new book goes on sale, it will be announced in your *Pot & Puma* first! ☐

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS IT?



Scott and Sylvia Clegg (of TX) sent us these photos of a #88 Water Jug they found down in Texas, made of Ada clay and glazed in the early Prairie Green. On one side is hand-carved a flower and some vines, and on the other side is a configuration of the initials ASMc. As you can see, the small "c" is in the top part of the "M", which we believe stands for a last name beginning with "Mc." On the bottom is stamped FRANKOMA with the oblong "o," along with the hand carved name "Bertie McCulloch." But that's neither "A" nor "S", and she was never an employee of Frankoma that anyone can recall. Could "Bertie" be short of "Alberta?"

I showed the photos to Gary Schaum, and he said, "Oh, I know that

piece." He had seen a collector/dealer buy it at a Tulsa auction house he attended in the mid-1980's. He vaguely recalls it was sold as part of a collection.

We suspected that it was one of those "employee playthings" we run across now and then. While it's not *badly* done, it's still a bit amateurish. The #88 Water Bottle was of course in the Frankoma line for a number of years, but certainly not with the design you see here. I took the photos to Wanda (still at Frankoma since 1947) to ask if she remembered an employee with a last name beginning with "Mc." She didn't, but picked up the phone and called the lady who did the payroll from 1947 to her retirement just a few years ago. She came up with one name, but it didn't have the right initials.

Dozens of phone calls later to every still-living early-1940's employee we could find, and we didn't know any more than when we started. Nobody ever heard of our Bertie. And then, a story surfaced from a collector that back in the 1940's Dad now and then let people buy pieces of greenware (un-fired), carve and decorate them, then return them to be fired. Joniece's childhood memory was then jogged, and she recalled seeing more than once Mother and Dad in the showroom setting greenware in a box with lots of newspaper.

The more we talked about it, the more the puzzle seemed to come together. We now believe that Bertie McCulloch was probably one of those customers who bought this piece before it was fired and did the fancy work on it. Most likely, considering it was done during those very "lean years," to Mother and Dad a sale was a sale. The #88 of that era sold for \$1.50. And it wasn't like Dad to charge a customer any more than the regular price of the item, just because they wanted to personalize it. ■ Donna

Carol Rogers (of IL) handed us these photos (right top) at Reunion 96 and asked if we knew anything about this piece of hers. She said she also knew of one other like it.

I can tell you that all of the "expert" collectors who are supposed to know the answers to questions like this have done a lot of head scratching since then! It finally came down to Joniece and me. We've examined it with magnifying glasses, made a list of possibilities, and talked in our sleep a lot about it. Can any of you shed any light on it? Perhaps you've seen one in someone else's collection. Or maybe some of you seasoned citizens can remember something about it at the time it was made.

It's obviously Ada clay and in the older Prairie Green. Joniece says she's almost sure it was made special for someone, because she doesn't remember it ever being in regular production. Dad could have designed it for a company, or for an individual who wanted him to make this particular piece, whatever it cost to make, and could pay for it.

We considered the possibility of it being a small Lazy Susan. But if it were made to serve food, what would be the point of a lid? And what are the holes for?

At first Joniece thought the lid was pressed. But of course it's from a time before Frankoma ever heard of hydraulic presses. However, after careful study and scrutiny, these are some of her thoughts:

"Because of the way the holes are cut out of the lid, I can tell that it was definitely cast as a "low bowl," then the four circular holes were cut out with an ice pick—because there is no dividing line angle. Since it had to be cast, it would be an impossible piece to make. And by that, I mean it would not be *profitable*. It would warp, not fit the bottom, and where the holes were cut out it would crack. Also, it would have to be dried very, *very* slowly to achieve any degree of success. It just wouldn't be worth the trouble. Remember we talked one time about that #F55 tall Wine Bottle? This is another instance that Daddy would have said to Ted and me, 'Find a way to make it not crooked!' But we never did, and I'm sure we never could have solved this one's problems either.

"I think this piece might have been a wind-proof, outside-type ashtray or cigar ashtray. Because the kind of thing it brings to mind are some large outside Lazy Susans Dad was working on in that era. It just kind of feels like it fits into that category."

Thanks, Carol, for the photos, and for asking about this unusual item! If any of you Frankomaniacs out there have any information to add, please do so. ■

Scott and Sylvia Clegg also sent us this letter, looking to ID two pieces they found in Texas. We called on the appropriate expert, Gibb Green.

Last summer we had the pleasure of finding a "bottle" in the Mayan-Aztec pattern. We have enclosed a photograph (Bottom Left). At first we thought it might be a bud vase. Then we spoke to Tom Grogg and Pat Warner. Each believed it is a condiment bottle. This makes sense, because the mold number #7R is incised on the bottom. It is Ada clay and about 5 1/4" tall. It is identical to the tall #7H Shakers, with the exception of the spout on top. We do not know anything else about this piece. We really think it's a beauty. We hope you are more successful finding information about it.

Another interesting Mayan-Aztec piece (Bottom Right) we have is a 3-qt. Baker (#7W) in Ada clay. As you can see, the Baker has open handles on the sides and a smooth, round handle on the lid. The only mark is the mold number incised in 1/2" letters. It is an Ivory color, but not like our other Ivory pieces. Our other pieces have an opaque, semi-matte glaze. The glaze on the Baker is more glossy and translucent. We are certain that the Baker is in Ada clay, but we are unsure about the color. We also have a Peter Pan in this same glossy, translucent Ivory glaze. It is also Ada clay. We don't know if this is newsworthy, but we think it's neat. Frankoma is always full of surprises!

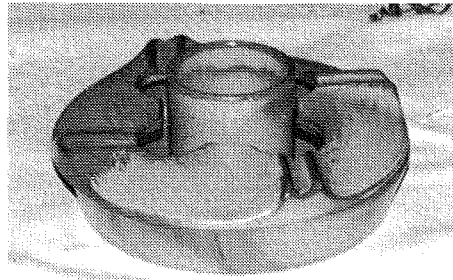
First, the easy one. I've seen the Ivory-like color on both Ada and deep red clay. Probably an experiment circa 1953-55. It's kind of half-way between Ivory and current Bone glaze. I've seen a set of #80c Tumblers, a small Wagon Wheel Baker and a Honey Jug in the "almost- Ivory." Joniece tells me that the open hands on those Bakers were used from 1948 until 1962, at which time the handles were redesigned.

Now for the #7R. I've never seen one. However, I have seen a #5R, the Plainsman version. I would guess late 1950's or early 1960's, same production years as the Condiment Jugs on Page 56 of Bess Book II. Clay and glaze are in Prairie Green, identical to my Condiment Jugs. The little necks are identical, too. I'd guess your #7R to be worth \$35-50 range, just like the Condiment Jugs.

***Very rare!** Was there ever a stopper for the R's? I doubt it. I've seen half a dozen of the #5R's—never a stopper. ■*

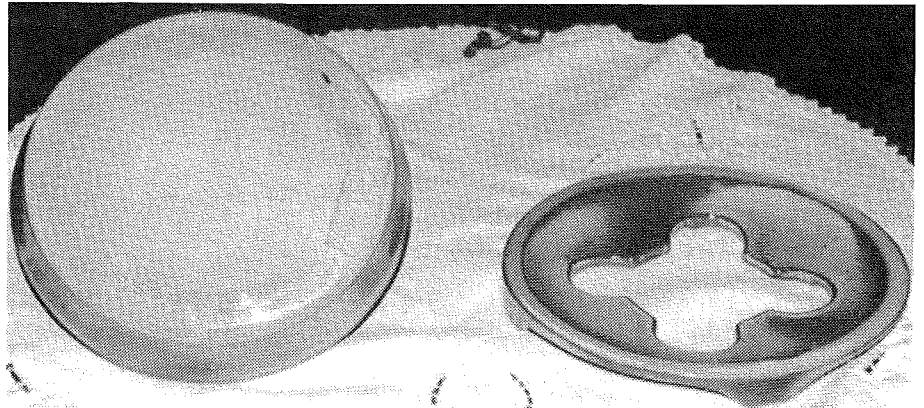
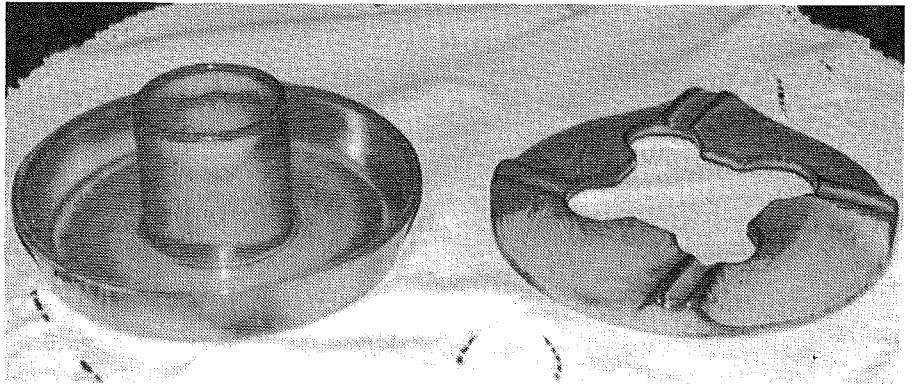
Great finds. Keep diggin'!

GG



What in the World Is It?

Five different views of Carol Rogers unusual Frankoma piece.



#7R Condiment Bottle



#7W 3-qt. Mayan-Aztec Baker

RARE & SCARCE FRANKOMA FINDS

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

REVIEW OF THE SMALL ROUND "O" MARK

You are probably aware by now that we Frankoma collectors can get quite frustrated in our attempts to date certain pieces, as John Frank wrote down very little in those early days. But clues do surface now and then, and if we keep our eyes and ears open, sometimes we can come up with some answers.

In previous writings I've stated that I believed the small round "o" mark was used from 1934 through 1936, when the Pot and Puma mark was introduced. New information has now changed my opinion.

First, I noticed *all first kiln pieces* (made in Sapulpa) that I have seen, or know about, are marked Frankoma with the small round "o" and dated 6-7-38—which proves the small round "o" *was still* being produced in June of 1938. These round "o" marks were on some of the smaller items.

Rereading a letter John Frank wrote (in May of 1970) to a writer who was doing a magazine article, he states that the Pot and Puma (or Leopard) mark was used *only* on larger pieces. This indicates to me that another stamp was being used on the smaller pieces. Therefore, I believe the small round "o" was still in use on June 7, 1938 for sure—and no doubt in my mind until the fire of November 1938—on medium to small items.

I have seen the *partial lower half* of the Pot and Puma mark on small items like the #31 Snail Vase, but I've *never* seen a complete Pot and Puma mark on small items. They may exist, though, and would be *rare* indeed.

Here are a few excerpts from John Frank's letter to that writer, which is printed in its entirety in *The Collectors Guide to Frankoma Pottery Book II*, by Susan N. Cox, Pages 10-16.

In the spring of 1934 we incorporated under the name of "Frankoma Potteries," and impressed the name with a rubber stamp also. We used this mark for the next two years, but we didn't put it on everything because of the size of the stamp.

The reason for the Puma and the Vase was that we had started in our first year to use some of the Joe Taylor pieces (sculptured pieces) and produced them along with our pottery. We hoped to develop this line of fine art things, but we found the market was not able to buy pieces of this quality during the depression. We ultimately dropped all but about 3 pieces out of the 15 we started with. The pot and puma were used to impress in the clay from 1935 to 1940, but only on larger pieces.

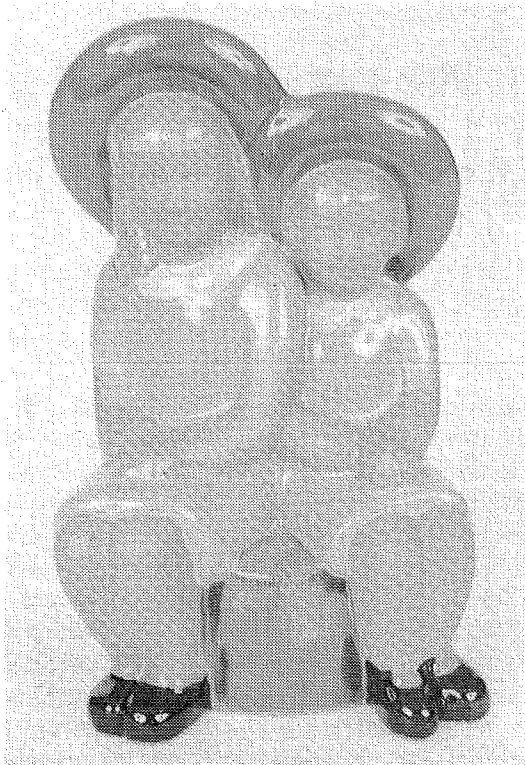
The word "FRANKOMA" was used from 1940-1946, imprinted in the clay, again on most pieces. Since then the name was put into what molds we could, and we no longer hand stamped any pieces. Instead, we used a gummed label on the outside.

I hope this puts some light on the subject. We live and learn. ■

THE "FRANKOMA GIRLS" PLANTER

If you have the Bess book, *Frankoma and Other Oklahoma Potteries*, you can go directly to Page 22 and find a lovely color photo of them. Bess says, "The girls were meant to represent Donna Ruth and Joniece at that age."

For those who don't have the book, here is a description. The piece is 6 ½" tall, two girls sitting on a round base that is 1 ¾" deep, hollowed on the back side for a planter. The girls have light blue wide-brimmed picture hats with long ribbons tied into bows



*The "Frankoma Girls" Planter—6 ½" Tall
Circa Early 1940's*

on the backside. Their dresses are a matching light blue with yellow collars. Mottled blue base, yellow hair, and blue shoes. Their faces, arms, and legs are terra cotta (unglazed, like the Frankoma Kids). They were glazed by hand with a small brush. There is a 1940's Frankoma mark on the bottom.

No one knows how many of these were made, but we know there were *very* few. And not all were glazed exactly alike.

The one I own (shown above and right) is different than the one in the Bess book. My girls have royal blue hats, light blue dresses with ivory collars, light blue socks (in Bess book, *no* socks), a mottled Prairie Green base, and black shoes. I purchased mine many years ago from a person in New Jersey.

Actually, very little was known about this piece until recently, when Donna came forward with some things we were not altogether aware of. It is rumored to be Donna and Joniece at about ages 11 and 5.

Donna says that some time ago, a collector told Joniece a story that John Frank hired a woman artist in the 1940's to do some designing, and it was she who designed the Frankoma Kids and the Frankoma Girls. (One look and you'll know they're done by the same artist.) Now, we know that during that era, Mr. Frank hardly had enough money to feed his family, much less hire an artist to do design work. Donna says her Dad may have hired a girl who was a would-be aspiring artist, but she would have most likely been a trimmer or a glazer.

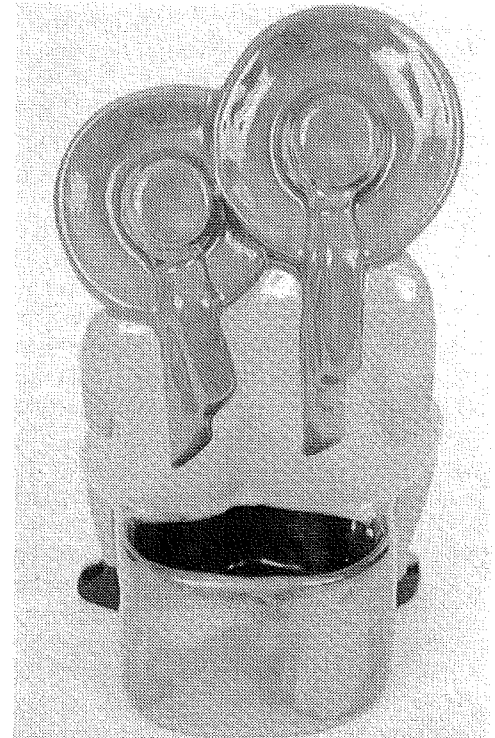
No one on earth is better able to know and recognize John Frank's work than Joniece. And Joniece has always steadfastly maintained that the stability of design and construction, the features, and the very character of these figures are definitely her father's. She thinks he probably made a handful of the Frankoma Girls, put them on the shelves, and when they didn't sell, he just didn't make anymore. For some reason, the Frankoma Kids caught on, and the double figured one didn't.

Joniece said the first time she saw the piece, there was absolutely no doubt in her mind that those two little girls were her and Donna. And in the early 1940's, the girls would have been 5 and 11, just about what these young ladies appear to be. Although Joniece's hair was dark, the hairstyles are accurate, as well as the shapes of their faces (Joniece's round, Donna's more oval).

Also, Grace Lee often made dresses alike for them, which they remember pleased their daddy very much and made him very proud. That very fact alone, we believe, could have inspired him to model his daughters in their dress-alikes.

Keep in mind that there are no *records* to back up any of the above. If there were records, the fire destroyed them. So you can accept their *instinctual* offering or not, but this is what the "Frank girls" believe about the "Frankoma Girls."

At this time, these are the only two "Frankoma Girls" known to exist, although there may be another one or two out there somewhere. We would certainly like to hear from anyone who has knowledge of another one! ■



*Back of "Frankoma Girl" Planter
Planter 1 ¾" Deep*

The Marvellous Mayan-Aztec

BY GIBB GREEN—WINDSOR, CO

Honoring The Art of the First Native Americans

One of the most enjoyable aspects of collecting Frankoma Pottery is the obvious connection to the culture of Native Americans. The most "native" of the cultural ties is in one of the most colorful dinnerware lines, the Mayan-Aztec.

Allow me to borrow a few quotations from the 1949 Frankoma catalog.

"One thousand years before Columbus discovered America, there flourished a civilization whose artistic, social and religious standards far surpassed any European peoples up to that time. Many archaeologists not only compare the art and architecture of the Mayans and Aztecs favorably with that of ancient Egypt, but in many respects prefer their achievements in art importance... The most widely known of the Mayan and Aztec arts are the numerous hieroglyphs. They were used profusely on buildings, altars, monuments and other such places, not only for embellishment, but for the recording of information... As they recorded history, or sang songs, or worshiped their gods, these symbols were gems of carefully planned, beautiful designs... It is through the inspiration of this wealth of beauty that Frankoma has created its new Mayan-Aztec line of dinnerware."

Company records actually indicate that the Mayan-Aztec pattern was introduced in 1948. My experiences as a Frankoma researcher, collector and antique dealer tells me that the pattern has never been more popular. It is the second most requested pattern, the Wagon Wheels being first. The collector, of course, usually asks for the Ada clay pieces first, and would be most happy with a vintage piece from 1948.

My research has indicated that there are 36 different molds that bear the #7 Mayan-Aztec line mark. There are at least 20 other pieces that bear part of the wonderful hieroglyphs that Mr. Frank so carefully copied from the first Native Americans. Fully twelve years before the whole dinnerware line was introduced, Frankoma produced the first Mayan-Aztec pieces. They bore the mold numbers of 82, 83 and 84, and appeared in the 1936 catalog. They were the 2-qt. pitcher, the coffee mug, and the larger beer mug. These remained in production until the dinnerware was introduced, then their mold numbers were changed to 7D, 7CL and 7M respectively.

Dinner plates were produced in three sizes. There were the 10-1/2", 9" and 7", mold numbers 7FL, 7F and 7G. The cup and saucer were numbered 7C and 7E. The dinnerware cup was a 5-oz., smaller than the aforementioned 8-oz. #7CL. The #7A and B cream and sugar were about 8-oz. each. The sugar had no lid in the Ada clay era.

There were two teapots, the #7T 6-cupper, and the darling #7J 2-cupper. The #7J is often a popular collectors' item outside the dinnerware realm. Oval platters were produced in both 13" and 17" sizes, the #7Q and #7P. A 16-oz. cereal or salad bowl, the #7X, and a 1-qt. service bowl, the #7N, were also in the line. In the early years, there was only one pair of salt and pepper, the #7H, about 5" tall. Before long, a 3" variety came along, the #7HS. The larger is ideal for stove use, the smaller better for use on the dinner table.

A couple of cuties also graced the line, the #7U individual baker with lid, and the #7S handleless mustard or sauce server with lid. Both are popular with novelty collectors. Two large bakers or casseroles with lids were also included, the 3-qt. #7W and the 1-1/2-qt. #7V. These pieces comprise the 1948 debut line.

After the Ada clay era ended in 1954-1955, a huge 15" round chop plate, the #7K, was added to the line. This is a wonderful piece to place in the middle of the table with a whole meal laid out on it. The single-stick butter dish produced in the red clay era also bore the #7K mold number. Also in the 1960's, two very useful rectangular platters were added, the 9" #7PS and the 13" #7QS, often called the steak platter. It's ideal for a big juicy Colorado T-bone; a steamy Idaho baked potato and some piping hot Kansas ditchbank asparagus. There is also the #7WL 5-qt. baker from the same era.

Two highly utilitarian bowls were also added, the 20-oz. #7XL for my cereal, and the 6- or 8-oz. #7XO fruit bowl in which I'm served my fresh raspberries every morning (I wish!). I have seen the #7XO in several sizes. #7JH was the number given the 24-oz. Mayan-Aztec bottle with stopper. Many of us have made these into lamps. The one in our family room is a real beauty!

The "7" series also included numbers for *sets* of dinnerware. A 45-piece set was #7LS; a 20-piece starter set was #7TS; and a 25-piece deluxe starter set was #7DTS. Also bearing the mold number were the #7TR Cherokee Alphabet trivet and the #7FS Cherokee plate. Both of these Cherokee pieces are perfect complements to any Mayan-Aztec table setting.

The #24 Canister series was intended to complement this dinnerware pattern. There are five pieces, numbered 24A, 24B, 24C, 24T and 24G, which are the flour, sugar, coffee, tea and grease, in that order. They range from 10" down to 5" in height.

The 50th Anniversary Plate (one of Joniece's finest works, in my opinion) has the Mayan-Aztec hieroglyphs border as well. And the #C4 coffee mug with hieroglyphs is most often seen with a Mayan-Aztec setting, as it is in the Green home.

Maybe the rarest of the Mayan-Aztec pieces is the 7" rectangular pillow vase, the #63Z, produced in 1949 only. It is gorgeous next to our bottle lamp! The most sought-after collectible among the Mayan-Aztec pieces is probably the #551 mini cream pitcher. It was used by the Franks for their 1949 Christmas Card. Another sought-after novelty is the #14 Mayan-Aztec bolo tie from the jewelry line of 1955-1957.

Three ashtrays were also produced to go along with the dinnerware. The #470 mini Mayan-Aztec Ash Tray was also the 1961 Christmas Card. The #471 is a 9" enlarged version of the #470 mini. The #488 is a 7" round ashtray with hieroglyphs, produced from 1966 to 1972.

Many of you wild-eyed collectors out there have used other Frankoma pieces to expand the artistic appeal of your Mayan-Aztec collections. They might include such Native American favorites as the #506 mini Thunderbird vase, the #59 Thunderbird canteen or decanter with leather hanger, or the very rare 5" Thunderbird Pitcher. Or—how about a #142 Commanche Indian Chief in your dinnerware color? Or, to flagrantly flaunt the value of your collection to your dinner guests, use your #2 Tepee dealer sign and your Taos Squaw as centerpieces!

"Okay, GG, you've done it again," the editor must be saying. "You've used 10,000 words to cover a 2,000-word subject!" Aw, c'mon, editor, everyone knows Frankoma collectors have *unlimited* amounts of time!

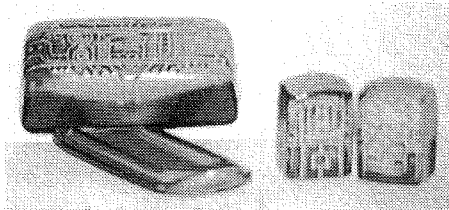
One more little goodie before I close. Did Frankoma ever make a *salsa*? Good grief, who knows? Well, five years ago I had a chance to buy eight of them. But I bought only one. It was the only one with no chips (in the clay—PUNishment intended). It is a little #501 ringed bowl (the same as the 1950 Christmas Card)—with the lid from the #7U Mayan-Aztec individual baker. The lid fits perfectly, and it's cute as can be! The lady from Nebraska who sold it to me at the Denver Antique Show insisted that it was a "salsa." It's even Prairie Green, Ada clay; just like its seven well-used chipped brothers. How about a new mold number for this one—7ITIAS (*I Think It's A Salsa*)?

You're probably all Mayan-Aztec'd out by now. Well, be sure to call or write if you find more pieces in the Mayan-Aztec line! Plus, I'm sure there are more good stories from collectors similar to the one told by Steve and Becky Carroll in the Summer '96 issue about the "musical tea pot" that allegedly had in its pattern a man playing a piano. Hieroglyphs strike again! ♪♪

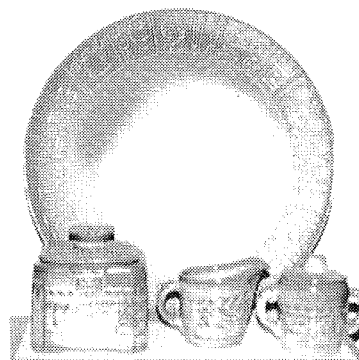
See you next issue...



#7C Mayan-Aztec Cup
#C4 Coffee Mug
Pre-1970 Woodland Moss



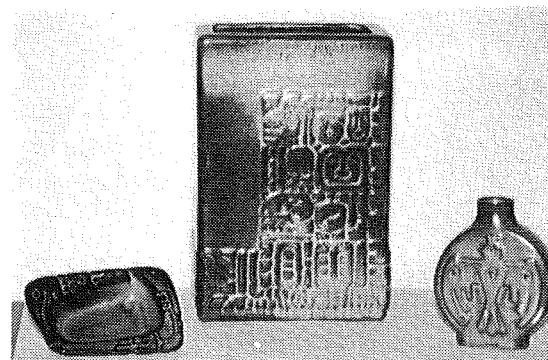
#7K Mayan-Aztec Butterdish
#7HS Salt & Pepper
Pre-1970 Woodland Moss



#7K-15" Mayan-Aztec Chop Plate
#24G Grease Jar
#7A&B Creamer & Sugar
All pre-1970 Woodland Moss



#551 Miniature Aztec Creamer, #7J Mayan-Aztec 2 Cup Teapot and the Salsa. All Ada Clay



1961 Christmas Card (#470), #63Z Pillow Vase and #506 Thunderbird Vase



Joniece's



Joniece tells the stories ...

Donna writes them down

Photography by Cornelius Photocraft of Tulsa



1965—*Good Will Towards Men*



1966—*Joy To The World*



1967—*Gifts For The Christ Child*



1968—*Flight Into Egypt*



1969—*Laid In A Manger*



1970—*King Of Kings*

Daddy's first and foremost commitment in the design of his Christmas Plates was to maintain a truly Christian theme, which was always to be around the birth of Jesus, "the reason for the season."

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Frankoma's On-Going Christmas Plates

After having talked about the Christmas Cards in the last issue, it seems logical that stories about the Christmas Plates should follow. How's that for a smooth segue?

Plates are excellent decorative items. They hang conveniently flat to the wall, and they don't require a frame. Hand painted or decorated plates are very colorful, and can often be the focal point of your room decor. They can also commemorate a special event, as in the case of the Frankoma Christmas Plate series, the birth of Jesus.

Mother and Daddy collected the Royal Copenhagen Christmas Plates. As beautiful as they were, it concerned Daddy that the theme of the *first* Christmas had been lost somewhere along the way. Daddy's first and foremost commitment in the design of his Christmas Plates was to maintain a truly Christian theme, which was always to be around the birth of Jesus, "the reason for the season." The Christmas star would always appear, either as part of the design, or overlooking the design. Once again, John Frank pioneered a new idea—a Christmas plate designed by an American, manufactured in America, in one color, in bas-relief, at a collectible price that everyone could afford.

His plan was to make one plate each year, and the master mold (also known as "block and case") was to be destroyed on Christmas Eve. No limited production number was ever established. However, stockpiling was never allowed. (To stockpile means to overproduce, hold for a few years and sell at an inflated price.) To us, this was simply unethical and dishonest. Remember, John and Grace Lee raised us to believe that your word is your bond.

And so we made only the number of plates ordered by customers. The only times we ever had extra plates was when, to fill orders in December, we might have made too many. That is to say, our production losses were normally 50-60%, and we broke all the seconds. Sometimes, we made extras to cover our losses, and then for some reason had a smaller percentage of losses, which gave us extra plates.

I'm sure Daddy sincerely believed that depictions of this subject were unlimited and endless, that one could design Christmas Plates on into eternity. To him, even the sky was no limitation. Or, with his faith and ability to live today, believing God would take care of the future, it probably never crossed his mind to fret about a little thing like "what will we do for next year's plate?"

He never worried about the future. With his foresight and his numerous ventures into new markets and avenues, you would think he was almost



1971—*No Room In The Inn*



1972—*Seeking The Christ Child*



1973—*The Annunciation*

obsessed with tomorrows. But he wasn't. A good example of this is when he designed the first Bicentennial Plate in 1972.

The series was to be five plates, one plate each year for five years, depicting the history of the American Revolution; the fifth plate, the last of the series, would come out in the actual anniversary year, 1976. On the back of each plate would be 1/5 of the signatures of all the signers of the Declaration of Independence. With the set of five plates, all the signatures would be used.

I came in around 3:00-4:00 one afternoon—probably filling in for a packer or something—and he was laying out those signatures on the back of the first plate. We had one of those wall-sized copies of the Constitution like you see in classrooms, and we traced the signatures off that document. Using carbon paper, we copied the signatures exactly onto the mold.

Before this story becomes too unrealistic for you younger folks, remember this was 1972, and copy machines that enlarged and reduced—if they existed—were certainly not part of our equipment at Frankoma. Daddy would pick out a signature and say, "Well, let's see, that one will fit here, and that one can go over here." That first plate went quite smoothly, because we could pick and choose from *all* the signatures.

During the creation of the second plate, I saw that I had best do a little planning if I was going to fit all those wild and crazy signatures of all sizes around the back of the future plates and get them all used in the next four years. However, too many things had to be taken care of in that year of 1973 for me to think anymore about it. But in 1974, I did make a pattern, and after I copied each signature on tracing paper, I laid them out as best and evenly as I could for the next three plates. I tacked them up on the wall of the studio, and as the years rolled along, they slowly got pulled off the wall and onto the plate backs.

Now, I've said all this to show Daddy's great faith that everything is going to be okay—just take care of today's duties today, and tomorrow will work out just fine. Being the Capricorn that I am, I haven't always been able to follow that particular trail up the mountain.

Back to the real world (mine), after years and years of repeatedly doing variation upon variation of "The First Christmas," I can assure you that ideas can eventually get a bit thin, not leaving a whole lot to draw upon without some repetition.

Think about it. You have Joseph and Mary, the three Wise Men, Angels, Shepherds, and of course the Christ Child. Daddy designed only nine plates before he repeated the subject of the Wise Men. I figured that was his way of showing me, without actually preaching to me, that there were always other ways to depict the same events around the birth of the Christ Child—without actual duplication.

I wonder if Dad ever dreamed that this series of plates would go on for *thirty-three years!* He did nine, I've done twenty-four. And I have, and always will

strive, to be faithful to his commitment of keeping the theme around the birth of Jesus.

There's no argument that some of these plates in the Christmas series are better works of art than others. Some are, to me, *excellent* pieces of art. Others fall into the "good" category, and a few are just "so-so." Let's talk about some of them and look at where our lives had taken us at the time they were produced, and maybe we can understand why some were great and others fell short.

In The Beginning...

The first Christmas Plate was produced in **1965** and titled **GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN**. As I believe I've mentioned before, Daddy commonly depicted one subject, but related to it in more than one way, so it often had more than one meaning for him. And to him, this plate also represented the start of his own family—himself, Grace Lee, and their first-born Donna. It also could be any other loving couple at the arrival of their first child. Too, it was a natural and very appropriate choice for the beginning of the series. Anyway, it makes for good conversation.

I must confess that for a long time the **1966, JOY TO THE WORLD**, was my favorite Christmas Plate of all. But later, when I began seriously studying the characters of those three Wise Men of the **1967, GIFTS FOR THE CHRIST CHILD**, that one moved up to the top of my list.

I was absolutely awed when I zeroed in on how Daddy had taken a few simple lines and, in such an incredibly clever and skilled way, managed to depict three very different and diverse personalities. If you own that plate, go look at it. Take a close look at how he sculpted the three different beards. There are only two profiles and one front view, so little here to work with to show three distinctly separate characters so vastly different from one another. And look closely at that wonderful box of jewels! With a little imagination, one can personally identify with each item of jewelry. Those beads! Those wonderful beads flowing from the box. And you can feel their weight as they spill out from the box and softly come to rest. This plate was created by an inspired and talented artist.

Not to overlook the **1966, JOY TO THE WORLD** (called "Bethlehem Shepherds" in the catalog and in the accompanying story). This plate is an excellent study in "Simple Expression." Don't you love his little animals? And those sneaky angels coming out of the clouds? The animals remind me of the incredible job he did on the reverse side of the Henry Bellmon medal. Some day we'll talk about that.

Daddy loved his **1968** plate, **FLIGHT INTO EGYPT**. He felt really good about the draping of the cloth. I say it's one of the most perfect ones he did. All the basic elements of good design, and so much more, are present here. It's perfect in every detail. This one deserves your time to look at it and appreciate it. And that donkey certainly does have a proud look—eyes

open and alert, going forward as if he knows exactly who he's carrying, and that *God chose him especially to play this important role in history.*

By now, most of you know how glazes and clays will change, even within a year, until you're ready to tear your hair out trying to identify a color. That year we produced *pink* Christmas Plates! Yes, I know a few have cropped up here and there, but *never* like in *1968!* I don't know for sure, but as I look back, I feel we either had a fresh dig into the clay hill, or we had to change and/or substitute an ingredient in the glaze formula that we hadn't yet perfected or gotten all the bugs out of. (Note: this pink cast can come from thin glaze and/or improper firing.) All of the White Sand was reacting the same during that period—turning out pink. As Mother rationalized, and she was right, not all of her Royal Copenhagen Plates were exactly the same blue either. This is true with Frankoma, but it's usually a result of thin glaze or soft firing. But in *1968*, there was some other culprit we couldn't pin down. People were very unhappy with us at that time, and many of those plates were returned because they "didn't match their others."

The reason that the first three plates are now more valuable is that far fewer were made. *1968 was the year the series really took off, as people began to realize their significance and importance. They ordered them, so we made them!*

1969, LAID IN A MANGER, was Dad's only Madonna and Child. When I was younger, I didn't understand why people would sit in a museum and paint the Masters. In my adolescent ignorance, I only saw it as copying. As I now restudy these wonderful plates of Daddy's, they are reteaching me techniques that I have missed, forgotten, and in some instances just overlooked.

In 1970, Dad learned he had cancer—an especially dread word twenty-five years ago. The disease had silently crept into his body and into his life. Of course he was a man of great faith in God. But being told that cancer was present throughout his body—lymph nodes, bone marrow, and more—and to undergo the horror of the radiation therapy of that time—it was simply a devastating year for him. The smile on his face never changed, though, and to most people he was the same, and nothing was bothering him. But those of us close to him saw the color gradually fade from his face, his eyes lose their sparkle, and his energy level wane.

His *1970* plate, *KING OF KINGS*, was the least popular, the most criticized of the series. He received hundreds of angry letters saying very unkind things about this plate. Those letters were *very ugly!* Daddy shrugged them off and said, "Not every painting by Gainsborough was a *Blue Boy*." But I know that, deep down, he was very hurt.

If I may step up on my soapbox for a moment, let's all stop before we criticize someone, and first walk a mile in that person's shoes.

When Donna came for the Christmas holidays that year, I was with her when she saw that plate for the first time. I saw her shock when she realized that this was

what Daddy had designed for a Christmas Plate. I took her aside and said, "Wait a minute, Donna. Look again at the face. Look at the gestures of the child's hands. Can you see it? It's Daddy all the way. It's a *self-portrait!*"

She stared at it for a few moments, and tears came to her eyes. "He's showing birth and death in one sweeping motion," she said. "It's all there in one statement, isn't it?"

I nodded. "Jesus said we are 'born of woman as He was, to die and have eternal life.' In his cancerous state, Dad's subconscious has placed *himself* on the cross. These are not a baby's swaddling clothes. This is not a characteristic garment of the living. It's a wrapping—like for a person already gone."

"Johnnie, do you think he knows?"

"He's too close to it. He doesn't see."

"Are others aware of what he has done?"

"A few perhaps," I replied. "But I can't help feeling that if the public ever realizes what this particular plate represents, and what it meant to him, it could turn out to be the most valuable of the series."

And So...

In 1971, the doctors said Dad's disease was in remission, and we were greatly encouraged to watch some of his color return, along with the happiness in his eyes and his characteristic high energy. It was a good year for him. Those of us close to him didn't know the future any more than he did. But we knew he was back with us for the time being.

The design of his *1971* Christmas Plate theme stands alone—*NO ROOM IN THE INN*. Look at Joseph's hand. Joseph may have had two left hands, but the Bible makes no mention of it. At the end of Joseph's outstretched right arm is a left hand. Check the thumb, and you'll see it. It was pretty well hidden with some sneaky shoulder and drapery maneuvers, and the error was not discovered until long after the plate was in production. Daddy just looked at it, had a good laugh, and went on with what he was doing, which was so typical of him. We teased him about this a lot, and he enjoyed every bit of it.

I remember one day at lunch we were talking about the Christmas Plates, and Daddy's face suddenly lit up. His hand came down on the table, and he said, "Oh, yes! Now I know what I'm going to do for next year's plate. I'm going to do me some *happy camels!*" Of course we laughed because we thought he was just being Daddy. But when the time came for the next Christmas Plate, that's exactly what he did. Look at the camels' faces on your *1972* plate, *SEEKING THE CHRIST CHILD*, and I know you'll have to smile.

In *1973, THE ANNUNCIATION*, depicted the angel announcing to Mary the coming birth of her child. But when I look at it, I see it also as "Dad's angel," as that was the year he died. Oh, to be able to do wings as beautifully as he did them! So simple, so soft, so expressive.



1975—*Peace on Earth*

Enter Joniece...

Now, as we stroll through and look at the Christmas Plates that I designed, I'm just going to mention a *few* in particular as to the whys, wherefores, and likes and dislikes of them. After all, my twenty-four plates (and more to come as far as I know) don't really need a thorough one-by-one critique.

I'm often told that I'm far too critical of my own work. I was fortunate to study with Joe Taylor while in college. He once told me that if I ever become satisfied with my work, I might as well quit and walk away, because I could no longer grow and learn. That time has never come. I can always see areas that I could have done better. And on the other hand, I had another teacher, my big sister (you know her), who taught me not to call attention to my shortcomings, as most people will never see them if the flaws are not pointed out. But I'm going to do it anyway!

So I'll continue by saying that I am *not* a Michelangelo. But, unlike him, I get to enjoy the people who love what I love. And *your* acceptance of my work has been among my greatest rewards. Because of your acceptance of what I create, be it good or bad or so-so, I would not change places with any of the Old Masters. They're not even qualified to be members of the Frankoma Family!

I did my first Christmas Plate in **1974**, called ***SHE LOVED AND CARED***. I like to think of this one as Mother and me, as Daddy had just left us. This plate taught me a lot about sculpting. It may seem that I'm really slow when I'm doing something creative. But I've learned over and over again that I have to get away from my work periodically, sometimes hours, or even days, then come back to look with new eyes at what I've done. And this is a good example. I was working on this plate, and one night I took it home with me. I sat at my kitchen table and worked into the night on just the foot of the Baby Jesus. In fact, I created what was probably the *best* little baby foot ever done by any art-

ist. I went to bed that night feeling like I'd been inspired and had accomplished something truly wonderful. I *loved* what I had done!

The next day, as usual, I spent most of my day involved in business dealings at the plant, making production and sales decisions, having no chance to look at what I'd done the night before. When the employees had left for the day, I returned to look at my incredibly wonderful little baby foot. Good grief! I was astonished! Horrified! I discovered that, although it was an absolutely splendid baby foot, there was *no way* it could have belonged to that baby on the plate! And so, sadly, it had to go back into the clay pile to be recycled, and that perfect little foot got tucked under Mary's arm.

Just the other day, a couple of collectors called and asked to come by for me to sign their White Buffalo and Bear Family. I'd been working on the next piece in the limited edition series, and when I'd left it the night before, I was starting to get sort of pleased with the way it was coming along. When the visitors arrived, they asked what the next animal in the series would be. They were such lovely people, I offered to give them a peek at it.

I rather proudly took them into my studio, and the second I looked at the face of the animal, it dawned on me in a flash what was so terribly wrong with it, the very thing that had given me such grief the night before. I almost wanted to tell the couple to go away and come back later! But I just nonchalantly picked up a piece of clay, smushed it between my fingers, and smeared it over the nose and eyes, and zip—suddenly it was there. It was "right." All those hours of anguish cured in less than a couple of minutes! And I suspect they drove away saying, "Wow! Did you see how fast she works? She's really good!" I sure hope they never learn the truth of it.

I am very proud of the **1975** plate, ***PEACE ON EARTH***—except for one small detail, the wings of the bird. I've always had a problem thinking of wings as "patterns" instead of "individual feathers." I don't have that problem when I'm sculpting hair on a figure. I don't think of it as thousands of individual hairs, but as flowing patterns and lines. But when it comes to wings, be they angels or birds (and you can see it all through my work), I do struggle there. Sometimes I'm more successful in getting through it than others.

But please! As you look at some of my angel wings, as for instance in the **1977** plate, and the birds in my **1975**, and the bird in my **1984**, as well as that poor ***Phoenix Bird***, do join me in hoping that each and every one of them—if reincarnation exists—will mercifully return in another life more beautiful than I created them in these plates! Amen.

This **1975** plate was a deviation from the actual birth of Jesus, and yet there's no doubt about what story it's telling. I love my dove, and I love my Joseph and Mary. I patted myself on the back on this one. This design was my first departure from the actual birth scene, yet staying within the symbolism and framework of the story.

About this time, I felt it necessary to begin designing the Christmas Plate early enough that it could be shown in the new catalog, which came out shortly after the New Year. That is to say, I would try to design the plate in November for the following year, to have it ready to photograph. Of course that was sometimes wishful thinking, as very seldom did I have the catalog out in January—or the plate ready for production in November—but at least that was always the plan.

So I was working on the 1977 plate at the end of 1976. And that year had been an extremely rough one for us at Frankoma. You must know by now how close I was to my employees. When one of them got married, had a baby, or when one of their relatives died, I was right there with them, experiencing all these things as a part of their family, as they did with the events in my life. That year, the man I was getting serious about died in July; Leona Thomas's husband died that December; an employee's son who was only in his thirties was killed; and another woman's husband had died. So with the 1977 plate, *THE BIRTH OF ETERNAL LIFE*, I was trying to depict something that would offer a comforting message about eternal life.

There are several instances that I've been guilty of becoming so involved in expressing the symbolism of the subject, I ended up totally losing the artistic expression I was going for. This 1977 plate is certainly one of those instances.

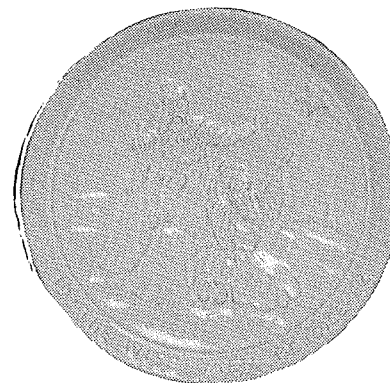
I tried to tie together the 1982 and the 1983. As you see, *THE WISE MEN REJOICE* in 1982 shows the Wise Men, but you don't see the gifts they're bringing to the Child. So for 1983, *GIFTS FOR THE CHRIST CHILD*, I chose to depict the offerings from the three Franks as also *our* gifts to the world, in the year of Frankoma's 50th Anniversary. There were Daddy's V-14 (a smaller version of his classic #77 Fireside Vase), Mother's V-5 Vase, and my V-14 Oriental Vase.

In 1984, I felt a real pull to return to the subject of the Madonna and Child, as my daughter BeverLee was expecting her first. Since it turned out to be twins (and of course angels in every way!), in 1985 I used two angels looking through the window of a church bell tower. In my opinion, *THE ANGELS WATCHED* was one of my better plates.

As we talked about in the last issue, the Christmas Cards showed phases that Daddy was going through as he designed them, like the cork bark, free form, Polynesian, etc. For the next few years, it's pretty clear that production problems at Frankoma clouded *my* design work.

Our clay and glaze materials were giving us migraines! No matter how careful we were in screening our clay, there was what we called "trash" that would show up—*only after firing*. An example of this would be tiny little black dots, almost like flyspecks. We went to great lengths to isolate the trouble, especially because those white plates were a natural attraction for them.

We covered the ware trucks with cloth, then with plastic, and we even tried glazing white when no other



1982—*The Wise Men Rejoice*



1983—*Gifts For The Christ Child*



1985—*The Angels Watched*

glaze was being sprayed on the premises. It drove us up one wall and down another! Where the *normal* losses on the Christmas Plates were 50–60%, they were now up in the 90% bracket. I got it into my head that I was going to put so much grass and busy stuff on the plates that a few specks weren't going to cause so many to end up being trashed. So as you can see, with the 1986, 1987, and 1988 plates, I did get rather carried away and over-busy. At the time, it was all I could think of to do.

The 1988 is a very good example of how painting a picture is so different from sculpting a design in bas-relief.



1992—*And He Called His Name Jesus*

The idea for *THE GUIDING LIGHT* came from a Christmas card I received. It was a very beautiful picture of all the snow and trees and a little deer. But it somehow just didn't translate—or I couldn't successfully translate it—to bas-relief.

In 1991 the Gulf War was ended. With *LET THERE BE PEACE*, I tried to say that the world was at peace once again.

1992, *AND HE CALLED HIS NAME JESUS*, is a very simple, almost "southwestern contemporary," version of the Madonna and Child. Perhaps Mother's magnificent collection of Madonnas was an influence here. However, realize I did this plate in 1991 for the year 1992, and what had finally ended were those ever so painful several years of not knowing if Frankoma would live or die. Now Mr. Bernstein owned the company, and although I didn't know what my personal future was, the love of my life, Frankoma, was safe. Maybe it was just a calm relief that was coming over me.

Now, on my 1995 plate, *FEAR NOT, MARY*, I came very close to really getting into feeling the flow of cloud-like wings. Unfortunately, Frankoma was going through a hard time with glaze adjustments, and most of that year's plates did not allow those nice wings to show.

On the opposite end, a good example of my "wings failure" is the *Phoenix Plate*. I confess that, as strange as it may seem, my memory of that year is rather blurred. Realize that in September of 1983 Frankoma had burned. We had pressed our first post-fire piece by late April, but we were not yet actually producing anything.

From the time my staff and I had unanimously made the firm commitment to rebuild Frankoma, I continually heard, "Do a Phoenix! Do a Phoenix! You've got to do a Phoenix!" We were operating temporarily out of a little house across the highway from the plant, and I was trying to design in a tiny little cramped back room. I so wanted this plate to be the most explosive,

dynamic, wonderful plate I had ever created! However, it didn't quite fly to the heights of my desires and expectations. Instead, I ended up with what was virtually—a red chicken!

I can always say I was so stressed and emotionally involved in the rebuilding of the plant that my creativity and design abilities were drastically stifled, because that's probably the truth of it. But I'd rather just fall back and say what Daddy said—which applies to every artist who ever lived. "Oh well, not every painting by Gainsborough was a *Blue Boy*."

And so the Phoenix is definitely one where I fell short of the goal. But also there were others. There are a few Christmas Plates that are not the greatest examples of religious art we can point to, and those are the ones I wish I could do over again—knowing what I know now, of course.

Back to the 1995 plate, the subject was again the Annunciation, called *FEAR NOT, MARY*. I really had a passion for doing this plate. I'd had this design in my mind for some time. Maybe the reason it finally surfaced was my being so close to my mother. I identified with this one so personally, as Mother's hands always seemed to reach out to me when I needed calming and reassurance. In this way, I could identify with Mary and her need to be comforted, to be told that there was nothing to fear, because God would always be with her.

With the 1996, *AN ANGEL'S BLESSING*, I wanted it to be a companion piece for the little *Angel For All Seasons* (my first angel, done just prior). I thought this plate and that angel would be so effectively displayed together. Maybe it was just an excuse to do something simple and easy because I really wanted to spend that time with my failing mother, not way back in the studio with my hands in the clay and plaster. I don't know that the point ever got across to anyone, as I never heard of them being displayed together.

There is one point that I have not discussed before, and I believe this is a good time to bring it up. In the fine sculpturing detail of the Christmas Plates, or any plate where an earthenware clay (in our case, red firing clay) with an art glaze is applied over the clay, some nightmares are created for the artist. I first realized this on the Sapulpa 75th Anniversary Plate I did in 1973 in Desert Gold. On the plate, I showed a piece of pottery, a brick, and a barrel type drinking tumbler to represent the three big industries of Sapulpa. Even after repeatedly measuring, viewing it in all kinds of light, and later rechecking the master mold to make sure the curved sides of that tumbler were even—and they were *perfectly even*—until the glaze was applied.

Remember that the glaze melts during firing, and it "puddles." That is, it runs off the high points to the lower points. The tumbler in that Sapulpa plate *appears* to be lopsided because of the way the glaze ran off of it. *The same principle affects many of the Christmas Plates.*

Many times details of a face, an eye, or a mouth will *not* show up in the finished product. The glaze

either covers it, or puddles around it, until it is obscured. Sometimes after working to get a certain facial expression, it will be just what I'm looking for. But the glaze will give it a completely different attitude than the one I created and wanted it to express. This is especially true with the new white glaze Frankoma is now using.

In all Christmas Plates, commemorative plates, all sculpted plates that are done in bas-relief—in Frankoma's clay and glazes, it is extremely difficult to know exactly how the glaze will run and puddle, and what detail may or may not show up when the final piece is put into production. To get around this with Mother's Madonna Plates, we used rubbed bisque instead of glaze.

In this year's plate (1997), *PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH*, I used my imagination quite a bit—a lot like I did with *Dorcas the Seamstress* in the *Teenagers of the Bible* series. Follow along with me here. You see, Dorcas was never mentioned as a teenager in the Bible. But because it is said that she sewed clothes for the poor and the needy, we can assume she learned to sew as a young girl, as many of us did.

I also made the same kind of assumption with this year's plate. I show Mary sewing baby clothes and Joseph making a cradle. I believe almost everyone can relate to the preparing for the arrival of a child, and especially the first one. And as I struggle sometimes in my stretching and reaching for a new way to depict the same story, I can see Daddy tossing his head back, and I can hear his wonderful mischievous, childlike laughter. It was that laugh of pure love that sounded when he was really putting a challenge before me.

I hope you like this 1997 plate. I feel pretty good about it. I'm very interested to know your thoughts and feelings about it. Will you write your comments in a letter to me? (These are now in production.)

Stop The Presses?

So many times I've heard, "Stop the Christmas Plates! I've run out of wall space!"

There are many different ways a person can look at collecting plates such as the Frankoma Christmas Plates, or the Royal Copenhagen Christmas Plates (that began in 1908 and are still going). To you who started collecting Frankoma's series in 1965 and have the complete collection, may I suggest that if you don't find pleasure in looking for more wall space, then change them every year or so. Try displaying the 1960's and 1970's for a year or two, then put up the 1980's and 1990's for a while. Or how about just putting up the ones you like the most?

Or pick out five of your favorites from the first ten plates and put those up for a year or two, then change to your favorites of the second ten for a while. Keep all the others stored. After all, the reason you began collecting them in the first place was for the pure enjoyment of it, as well as an investment for the future. So you don't want to stop collecting them now.



Phyllis Bess

1997-Preparing For the Birth

Realize that there are many young people out there who started their collections the year they got married—or the year they bought their first home, to celebrate their first Christmas together. Others bought a Christmas Plate the year of their wedding, then added a plate each year one of their children was born.

You see, the Christmas Plate collections can be much more than just "accumulations." It's not necessary to have every one of them. Don't think because you don't own them all from 1965, you don't have a collection.

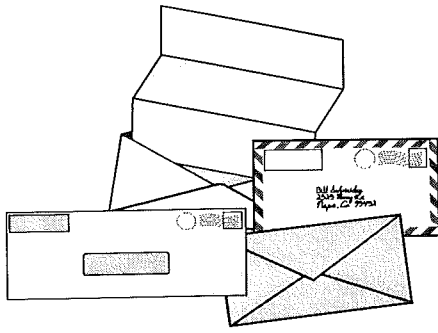
Think about it. Is it fair for us older people (we who can remember 1965) to take the pleasure away from the bride of tomorrow, or the new child of next year?

When is it time to say "enough"? When you no longer want to celebrate the birth of a new baby in your family or among your friends? When you can no longer remember teaching a daughter or a granddaughter to sew? When there's no longer a time you can relate one of the Christmas Plates to an important event in your own life? Or will we stop collecting when we stop celebrating Christmas and the birth of Jesus? I hope none of the above.

A Word Of Thanks...

Thank you for collecting the Christmas Plates, and the sculptures, for serving food on Frankoma dinnerware, and for putting your flowers in our vases. Also, I humbly thank you for looking at the Christmas Plates for some of those years, and doing little more than shrugging your shoulders and perhaps wondering, "Where was her head *that year*?" And then faithfully returning the next year to see if I present you with a better one.

To each and every one of you wonderful collectors, I say—*You are the greatest!*



Mail Call

Jo told us earlier that she was so excited when she left the reunion last September, she had to stop at a little antique shop on the way home to see if there was any Frankoma to buy. She found a **Jesus the Carpenter Plate**, and although it wasn't a particularly rare piece, she felt such an attraction to it, she had to buy it. This is what her latest letter says...

Dear Donna...

I wish I could put into words how much I enjoyed the articles by Ray, Pat, Gibb and Joniece. They are so informative! I will use the information over and over. I loved the Christmas Card "guessimates!" I knew some were rare, but now I know **how** rare—and the Trade Winds, too.

One more thing—my **Jesus the Carpenter Plate** was signed in black felt pen "**To Kim—John Frank.**" That's why I felt so strange about finding it after leaving your house. I also got such a wonderful buy, almost a gift!

(My husband Bill is getting Mrs. Bear for Valentine's day.)

Jo from OK

Congrats on finding such a treasure, Jo! If the price was that good, maybe it was a gift from JF himself. It's very much like something he would do. Stranger things have happened, you know. And Happy Valentine's Day, Bill!

Dear Nancy...

Donna Frank mentioned you're setting up a buddy list and chat forum (on the internet), and suggested I e-mail you permission to use my online address. Okay by me. Do you have anymore info?

Let me also say that the **Pot & Puma** and FFCA are the best. Being a collector and dealer of a variety of American potteries and dinnerwares, I've seen many publications and been in several clubs. FFCA wins **hands down!**

Mike from NJ

Wow, Mike, thanks a lot! You make us mighty proud.

Dear Nancy...

I sent my dues the other day, along with a note telling you I did not receive the autumn issue of the **Pot & Puma**. We have problems with our mail delivery, and I thought perhaps it was lost in the mail, and I sure wanted to receive it. Well, the envelope came a few days ago with my **Pot & Puma** and your letter of explanation.

My apologies to you for inquiring, as I'm sure you have had many. So sorry for all the trouble you had, and thanks for such a wonderful publication! I've had many of my questions answered about some of my Frankoma pieces through these publications.

Margy from TN

Thanks for your understanding, my dear. We're so pleased you thought it was worth waiting for!

Dear Joniece and Donna...

I was so happy with the last **Pot & Puma!** Your "Believe It Or Not" is wonderful! I've been waiting for it. It's a joy to read about special pieces. Even if we don't have them, we can appreciate them. I have a complete set of the Grace Lee (Christmas Card) series, and I was so impressed, I purchased the others via Pat Warner. I keep them on display almost all the time. They bring me so much joy.

Thank you, thank you for the article. It gives me so much special insight, and I sincerely appreciate your writing it!

Jim from MN

What a letter! It's wonderful people like you that keep our grindstone turning!

Dear FFCA...

I enjoy the **Pot & Puma** and **Prairie Green Sheet** and all, even though I am a silent member. I have a great deal to learn and am unable to attend the reunions. However, I will keep on collecting the pieces I like. Thank you.

Pat from NE

Dear Nancy...

Thank you, Nancy! I'm using the Bess books **Frankoma Treasures** and **Frankoma and Other Oklahoma Potteries**. I didn't know that there were others.

THANK YOU for telling me about the numerical listing guide! I never heard of any of these things before. I have been buying and selling Frankoma since 1985, but most of it was just flying by the seat of my pants. Other dealers always thought it was funny that I bought and invested so much in "that" pottery that would never sell. My contacts recently with both you and MarionOK (online) have made up for

a lot of the ridicule I've had over the years! Thank you very much for this.

I am eagerly awaiting your package, and I will fire off a request for the list book that you noted (by Maxine Saddler).

Tom from GA

Tell those other dealers to wake up and smell the coffee, Tom! Turns out you're the smartest one of them all—not to mention you have a better eye for beauty. It's finally fashionable and hip to be a Frankomaniac!

Dear Joniece...

We received our bears. Wow! We are so thrilled. My mother was ecstatic when I gave her one. The Mama Bear is a silent sentinel sitting in the highest point in my office. The babies are so precious. Bev and I are looking forward to your next piece.

Gibb from CO

Dear FFCA...

I was so delighted to find out Frankoma has a collectors club. While attending the 3rd annual pottery show in San Jose, one of the dealers (Bob Palko) gave me a "Come Join Us" card to fill out.

I was born in Tulsa, so I am very aware of Frankoma. I started collecting about 5 years ago and have 59 pieces. My all-time favorites are all the miniatures. Hang in there!

Pam from CA

We're hangin', Pam! You should get together with Gibb Green, also an avid fan of the miniatures. See his article in this issue about the Mayan-Aztec. You'll find his phone there, so call to him.

Dear Donna...

Thank you so much for all the information you sent me on FFCA. I was really thrilled to get it. It was especially thoughtful of you to include the issue on Frankoma signs. I enjoyed reading all the publications. In fact, I have already been in contact with two of your members and have 4 new signs on the way to me now. Reading through the **Prairie Green Sheet** made me feel like a kid in a candy store. Some pieces are available here in Ohio, but not many of the Western and Indian-related items I collect.

Again, I appreciate all the information. Enclosed is my check for membership, and I'm really looking forward to becoming a part of the "Family." It's great to talk to people who love this pottery as much as I do.

Nora from OH

Welcome to the Family, Nora. Your enthusiasm jumps right off the page at us. You're such a welcome addition to FFCA. Hope we'll get to meet you in person in September!

Dear Gibb...

We enjoyed your article in the Pot & Puma on "Observations." We always enjoy reading all your articles. And we're pleased to know that you will conduct seminars at the next reunion. We found your seminar in 1996 very helpful. We think it is a good idea that needs to be repeated! You say you are researching the Mayan-Aztec pattern. We hope you can dig up some interesting facts about this lovely dinnerware pattern. We are looking forward to your upcoming article.

Scott and Sylvia from TX

Thanks for your kind words. Keep diggin'!

Dear Donna...

I just learned through Nancy that you're online. Last fall, while in PA, I stumbled upon a very beautiful honey jar. I've been looking for a nice honey jar for years, and this one was marked Frankoma. Since then, I've been finding pieces of Frankoma here and there. Just two weeks ago I learned about FFCA and the message boards online with Frankoma advertising. If it weren't for the Internet, who knows how long I would have lived without knowing about Frankoma? I'm even dreaming about it!

I've learned so much in such a short time, and I can't tell you enough how much I appreciate the work of your father, mother, and sister. I love your pottery! I'm collecting the Wagon Wheels, as well as other Western and Southwestern designs. Also I'm collecting the figurines. I just ordered Joniece's Great White Buffalo, the Bear Family, and the Wolf Family, which I should be receiving in the near future. I hear the Wolves are still in progress, so they will come later. I am so glad to be a member of this organization!

In a mall up in Frederick, MD, I found the Circus Horse and the Gardner Boy and Girl, all in Prairie Green. My heart went pitter-patter. I couldn't leave them behind, and now they're here in Washington, DC, amongst the rest of my Frankoma treasures. I'm very proud of these wonderful Frankoma Kids. I've named them after my great-great grandparents, Henry and Delilah (I'm into genealogy). The Kids have already started a garden. Right now they're tending to the Circus Horse, and fencing a field in anticipation of the arrival of the new Buffalo. I read the story about the Kids in my first issue of the *Pot & Puma*. Is there any way I can let Maxine Saddler know that I have two with me here in DC?

I take pottery courses every Sunday and am learning the potters wheel. I just

wish I could come up with the glazes you have mastered.

I want to thank your whole family for creating such beauty with your hands. To me, what comes out in your pottery is very important because I see there is beauty in your whole family. Thank you.

David from DC

We welcome you to the Family, David. Your letter is warm and wonderful, and you're already one of us. Hooray for the Internet!

Howdy!

Greetings from a transplanted Okie who loves Frankoma! I was browsing the Web for my favorite pottery and saw you listed. Sure was tickled to find a collector's club. I hope you have a newsletter to which I can subscribe. I also know some folks in the Tennessee hills who find life meaningless without Frankoma around. I almost always find a piece or two in the little antique shops and malls in the nearby little towns, and their pricing is creative, to say the least!

Pat from TN

I think you've been out there on your own long enough, Pat. Welcome to the Family of Frankomaniacs!

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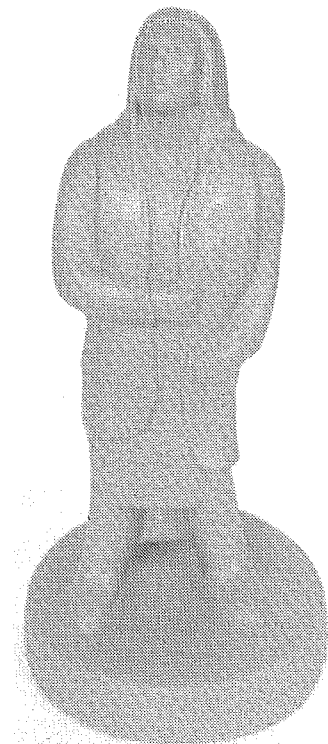
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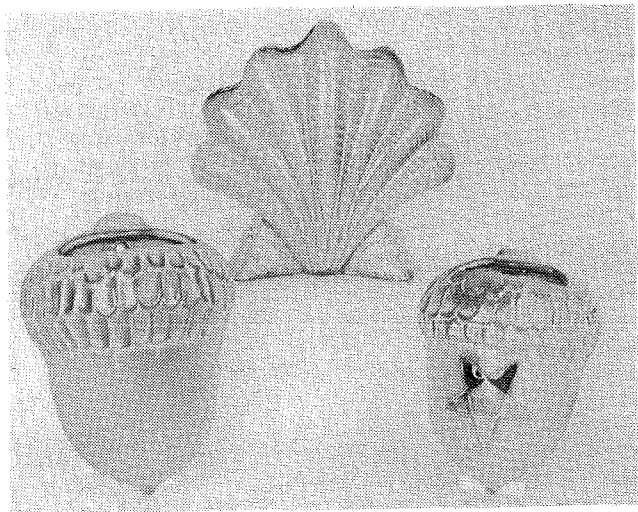
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 Right: #190-5 1/2" Small Acorn Wall Pocket

COLLECTORS AND THEIR COLLECTIONS

BY RAY STOLL—OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

Collectors and their collections are as variable as there are items to collect! In that respect, Frankoma collectors are little different than collectors of any other item.

One of the most interesting aspects of collecting Frankoma is the great variety of types and colors of items there are to collect. Some collectors bring home anything and everything they can find that was ever made by Frankoma. Then we have the specialists—those who collect only certain types of items, or exclusively one color. I believe that the latter category includes, in one form or another, most Frankoma collectors.

Many collectors are especially attracted to the miniatures (or only have limited space to display anything large) and have specialized in those, and others collect only the animals. Some collect the many plates—those issued in a series such as Christmas Plates, Bicentennial Plates, the Wildlife Plates, etc.—as well as the numerous commemorative or specialty plates.

The Frankoma trivets are a collection all by themselves, with literally several hundred different ones available. Some collectors have decided to just collect one or two colors of Frankoma pieces, and these can make for a very attractive display.

One of the more challenging ways to collect Frankoma is to see how many different colors you can find of a specific item, particularly one that was made for an extensive period of time. One I discussed in an

earlier article was the #31 Snail Bud Vase, the longest continuously produced item in the Frankoma line. Other items you might consider include the #54, 6" Shell Vase, which was made from 1942 to 1956 and again from 1980 to 1988. A "line-up" of this pretty vase in its large variety of available colors can be fun and most attractive.

Another nice item is the #59, 6-1/2" Thunderbird Canteen, made from 1942 to 1988, which Maxine Saddler talks about in her article on Page 4 of this issue. This item was often used as a honey jug, and ones have been found with *Henry's Honey* embossed into the mold. The various honey containers are another interesting collection. The #838, a 10-oz. Pitcher, can serve as a very beautiful and useful "color chart," as it has been produced since 1965 in all colors used since that date, and it is still being made today.

Another possible specialty could be the #190 Acorn Wall Pockets, which were made from 1942 to 1976. The earlier ones measure 5-1/2" from tip to top (all Ada Clay Acorns are in this category), while the later ones measure 6-1/2" from tip to top. I have been unable to document exactly when and *why* the size change was made, but Maxine Saddler has indicated that #290 was intended to mark the larger items; however, this was never done. Some of the earlier Acorns were decorated both in the mold, and by colors, for such organizations as the Eastern Star, mostly in the mid and late 1940's.

And these are but a *few* of the possibilities for creating outstanding specialty collections! As you can see, Frankoma's versatility lends itself to a wide variety of collections to satisfy even the most discriminating collector, which is another good reason for pursuing our common goal—the collecting and appreciation of our beautiful collectible *Frankoma Pottery!* ●

SCULPTURES

By

Janiece Frank

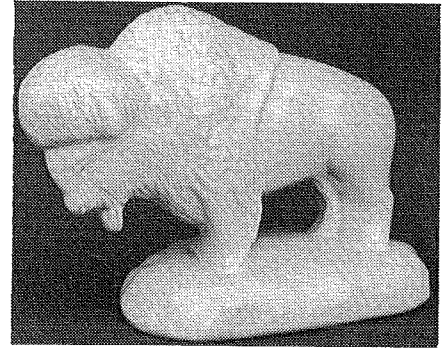


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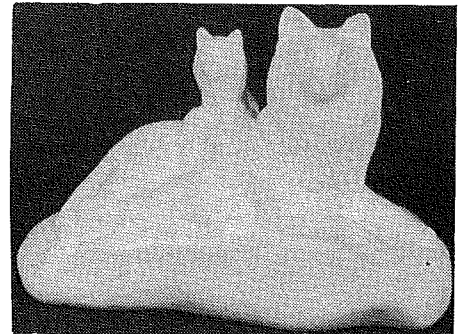
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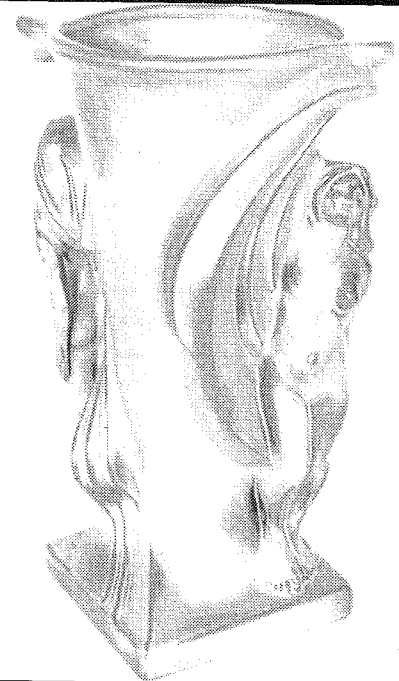
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