Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Richard B. Gump

COMPOSER, ARTIST, AND PRESIDENT OF GUMP'S, SAN FRANCISCO

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

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Copy No. _____

San Francisco,
1987

To Those Interested in my Self-Portrait:

Please don't call it sad. I am caught in a pensive mood.

Bob Leitstein, now head of GUMP'S, asked for my portrait, and in seeking someone who could draw fairly well I ended up selecting myself.

It is not conceit. It is just that I was pretty sure of this artist's work.

Richard Gump

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Introduction

Having known Richard Gump for twenty-eight years and having traveled with him around the world on so many of his buying trips I can honestly say he is one of the great teachers of culture in all its forms. Without lecturing or pontificating he imparts knowledge in a very natural and easy way which makes art, architecture, music and history a daily pleasure. This is a rare trait in one who knows so much.

What a joy it is to experience this truly exciting and uplifting education that never ends.

Johanna Sianta

Florence, Italy
March 1988

INTERVIEW HISTORY - RICHARD B. GUMP

Richard B. Gump was recommended for an oral history by close friends of his in 1984, and we enthusiastically agreed. A member of an old San Francisco family, retired as president of a world-famous store which in his generation he had brought to new standards of good taste and successful merchandising, he was a most appropriate subject for the Regional Oral History Office. The prospect of a package from Gump's has always been delightful, and the prospect of interviewing Richard Gump himself was one we looked forward to with pleasure.

In 1981 Richard Gump had given to the University of California his thirty-five acre estate on Cook's Bay on the island of Moorea for a biological research station, "dedicated to research, preservation of the environment and to the benefit of the Polynesian people." We remembered an article about this new Pao Pao "campus" in UC Berkeley's Cal Monthly in 1982, in which its donor was introduced not only as president of the famous San Francisco store, and locally known for his Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band, a versatile man, merchant and director, but also as a composer of both classical and modern music, a watercolorist, and a lecturer and author who could be found at home in San Francisco, in Moorea, in Florence, Italy, and sometimes in Bad Gastein, Germany.

The Bancroft Library's director James D. Hart wrote to Richard Gump in March 1984 to tell him about the Regional Oral History Office and to invite him to be a memoirist. "First of all we would like to have more documentation on your family as well as on its remarkable store, an institution famous not only in San Francisco since Gold Rush days but famous worldwide," was how the invitation began.

Richard Gump accepted the invitation but said he would be traveling for a while. He was in and out of San Francisco through 1986 and it was not until April 20, 1987 that we made his acquaintance in person at the presentation to another well-known San Franciscan, Louise M. Davies, of her oral history, From Quincy to Woodside: Memories of Family and Friends. Here at our side at a party full of notables was Richard Gump in person, accessible, entertaining, interesting, and ready and willing to begin on an oral history. The only thing keeping him from beginning immediately was an imminent hip operation.

While Mr. Gump was having the operation and in recovery in the hospital in May, his secretary for forty-two years, Mrs. Wilson Graham, prepared for the interviewer files of articles and data about her boss, with sections on the biographical, the musical, the art, the philanthropies. We absorbed that, read Gump's Treasure Trade, the story of the store written by Carol Green Wilson (Crowell, 1965), and reread and marveled at Richard Gump's wise and witty Good Taste Costs No More (Doubleday, 1951), and Jade, Stone of Heaven (Doubleday, 1962). A chronological outline for the interview was developed, and a first taping set for June 12, 1987.

Gump's on Post Street in San Francisco is a famously beautiful store. The outside was richly described in a 1981 Town and Country as a "...three-story building tastefully painted the color of black plums. Seasonal flowers--daisies, daffodils or geraniums--bloom in window boxes along the upper level of the store facade. The spruced-up 1909 structure has the allure of an aging geisha whose timeless charms shine through the years and layers of cosmetic paint. Maroon awnings droop over the store windows like giant false eyelashes, luring passersby toward the award-winning window displays. The panoramas entice shoppers to look, seducing them to come inside the entrance discreetly marked 'Gump's--Since 1861.'"

Reading such an intriguing description of the outside of a store could make the reader wish to know where the interviews with the store's arbiter elegantiarum took place, in what surroundings. In fact, they were quite wonderful. Far from plugging in the tape recorder in the usual neutral space of an office with interviewee ensconced behind his desk--Richard Gump has said in a newspaper interview that "desks are walls to protect executives from the people who call on them"--the meetings were held in different rooms of Richard Gump's penthouse in San Francisco, colorful, dramatic, distinctive spaces. Our first meeting was in the living room which is described in some detail in the oral history (Chapter VII), a heavily-curtained inner sanctum of art objects, paintings, and silver treasures presided over by its owner with a combination of pleasure and modest dismissal.

We met in other spaces with other moods. Often it was the room where the C-model Steinway and Ludwig von Beethoven reigned, alongside modern electronic musical equipment, a room mostly black and white with leather couches, prints and books and watercolors by the musician-artist-owner. Functional white window blinds protected the piano on the western side of the penthouse, but on request they were raised to admit the excellent view. Another interview was in a marine blue bedroom-study which looked out toward the Golden Gate. One day, delivering some papers, I met with Mr. Gump's assistant Michelle Darr in an airy cream

and gold east-facing dining room, a totally different space, and very French. The connecting halls were like art galleries. Only the kitchen could be described as a "neutral" space.

That this oral history is as chronological and informative an account as it is thanks to the persistence and hard work of three of us: Richard Gump, who accepted direction and an occasional slowing down that at times frustrated him; the interviewer, who followed tangents for keys as to how the very creative mind of Richard Gump worked; and Clariece Graham, the able secretary who took a four-page list of queries, and a xerox of the transcribed and edited interview, and rounded up the answers from her records, her memory, and from her by then far-flung boss.

The interviewing went on from June 1987 to August 1987 in six long sessions. Because Mr. Gump's fascinating asides made him sometimes hard to follow on tape, the transcriber was given copious notes to work from. The transcribing went slowly and it was not until February 1988 that the transcript, as edited in the office, went to Mr. Gump. He read it in Florence where he continued to recuperate from the surgery of the previous spring.

Throughout the manuscript the reader will see the notation "[Added later]." This reflects the arrival in our office of further thoughts and dictations from abroad by Mr. Gump. He conferred with us several times by telephone, from Florence and from Paris, in part to assure himself that his work as a composer had been covered adequately in the interviews. Indeed with the cassette of dictations that he sent from Florence in March 1988 he included a musical interlude of his own composing!

In our editing and subsequent discussions with Mrs. Graham we reassessed our success at fulfilling the initial mission of The Bancroft Library to document the remarkable store. At the suggestion of Mr. Gump, we called Ken Kojima, retired appraiser of fine arts and antiques for the Bureau of Customs in San Francisco, a friend of Richard Gump's since they first met over a shipment of antiques. Could he and his wife come from Modesto, where they had retired, to meet with us and talk about traveling with Mr. Gump in Italy in 1972? The resulting interview in which we discussed the making of reproduction antiques, as well as the mechanics of importing antique and reproduction furniture, is appended.

The second highly-recommended friend-informant was Paul Faria, a Gump's employee from 1947 to 1983, director and buyer for the European Furniture and Antiques Department as well as a clarinetist and fellow member of the Guckenheimer Sour Kraut band which Richard Gump put

together in 1949. Paul Faria traveled with Mr. Gump on two three-month buying trips through Europe in 1960 and 1964 and in his interview attests to the inquisitive mind, non-conforming nature, and continuing probing interest in things new and different that motivates Richard Gump.

Paul Faria and Ken Kojima's reminiscences of the value for them of time spent with Mr. Gump are underscored by Helen Heninger's statement to Town and Country, talking of her time as director-buyer in the Art Gallery when Richard Gump was president of the store. "He was wonderful to me. He sent me to New York to galleries, museums and to buy. He was very knowledgeable and educated me on a fantastic tour through Florence, Rome and Paris. You won't find many art dealers who would go to that trouble and expense to train their staffs." And the introductory words of Johanna Sianta, again stressing the teacher-mentor side of Richard Gump, remind us we should not be surprised when this interviewee goes from an explanation of the true story behind Madame Butterfly to a brief lesson on the Battle of Poitiers.

We have in this volume an oral core sampling of Richard Gump, how he speaks, what he thinks about, and what he has achieved, in music, in art, and in business. He has treated with great thoughtfulness his role as the last of three generations of family presidents of a San Francisco institution that has weathered earthquake, fire, depression, war, peace, trade barriers, development, change and more change and is entering its 127th year. In 1916 Emily Post reported that when she was in San Francisco for the Panama Pacific International Exposition, the "Fair," with her friends, they were daily asked whether they had been to Gump's. "To Gump's?" she said, "Of all the queer sounding things, what is Gump's?" In 1981 the president of Macmillan, the broad-based New York publishing company that purchased the store from the Gump Corporation in 1969, answered, "Gump's is unique. It's fascinating. It's like no other store anywhere. The buyers are as knowledgeable about their wares as museum curators are about their collections." Nothing about that uniqueness is accidental, and most everything about it is thanks to its last family president, Richard B. Gump.

I appreciate the help in the preparation of this oral history of Paul Faria and Ken Kojima, and of Clariece Graham and Michelle Darr. Johanna Sianta, a long-time friend of Richard Gump's with a background in art history and advertising, wrote the introduction. James R. K. Kantor, UC Berkeley's archivist-emeritus, was my proofreader. The Regional Oral History Office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

September 1988
Berkeley, California

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

Gump
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Richard Benjamin Gump

Date of birth Jan. 22, 1906 Birthplace San Francisco

Father's full name Abraham Livingston Gump

Occupation ~~Retired~~ Merchant Birthplace San Francisco

Mother's full name Mabel Beatrice Lichtenstein

Occupation Housewife Birthplace San Francisco

Your spouse Divorced

Your children One son - Peter

Where did you grow up? San Francisco

Present community San Francisco & Florence, Italy

Education Grant Elementary School. Then 7 years Potter School, Stanford 2 quarters, Cal. School Fine Arts. Too many other means of education to delineate in this questionaire

Occupation(s) Retired Interior designer, Composer & Artist

Areas of expertise Oriental Arts of the past, as well as most European cultures. Many years as a merchant of household possessions

Other interests or activities Always absorbed by the theater, ballet, music in most forms except "ROCK." Am often called upon for designs — Commissions

Organizations in which you are active S. F. Symphony Board, ~~[illegible]~~ an Asian Arts Museum

My most important occupation seems to be sadly-neglected: I was president of Gump's from 1946 to 1971. and GUIDED the store's policies —

Richard Gump

Record of Employment at Gump's

1925-26	Apprenticeship, various departments, San Francisco
1926-27	Draftsman, Design Department, San Francisco
1927-30	European buyer
1930-32	Director, Picture Gallery, San Francisco
1932	Tahiti trip
1932-38	[not at Gump's] Designer, art department, MGM, Hollywood
1939-41	Head Designer, Gump's, Honolulu
1942-44	Manager, Discovery Shop, San Francisco
1944-47	Vice-President and General Manager
June 30, 1947	President and General Manager
March 1, 1952	Reclassified, President only
Jan. 1, 1953	Reclassified, President and General Manager
Apr. 30, 1969	Chief Executive Officer when acquired by Crowell, Collier and Macmillan, Inc. [CCMI]
Jan. 3, 1972	Chief Executive Officer of Gump's Division when Gump's, Inc. merged into CCMI
Apr. 30, 1972	Retired

Greatest Satisfactions

"At the age of nine when a symphony played a work of mine..."

"When I shot in the seventies..."

"When I first soloed (a seaplane) on June 19, 1961..."

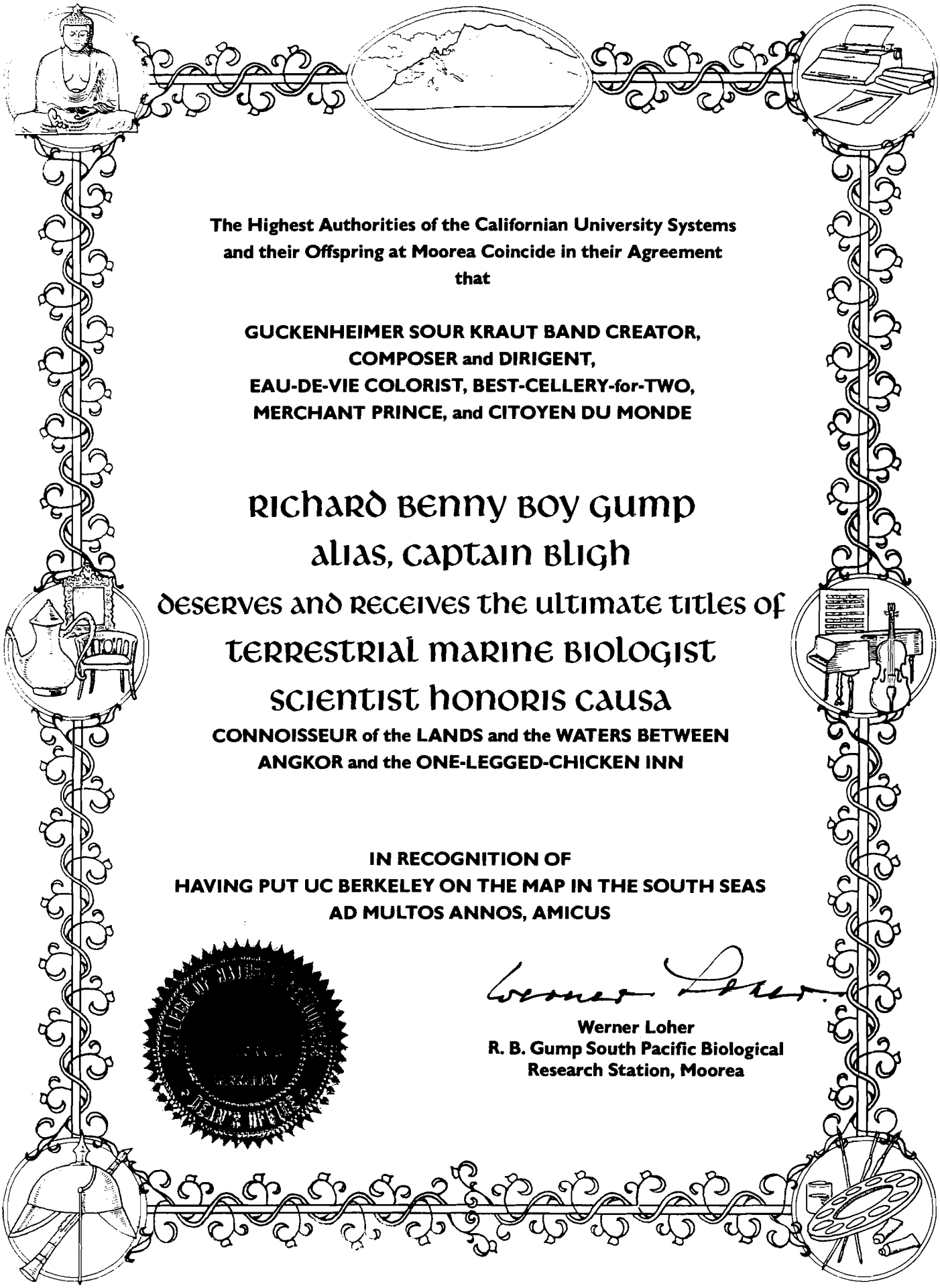
Most Beautiful Places in the World

Lincoln Cathedral, "where I'd like to play the organ before I die," and Moorea.

Insight

"I'm a gregarious recluse."

Presented to Richard Gump on the 11th Day of April 1989



The Highest Authorities of the Californian University Systems and their Offspring at Moorea Coincide in their Agreement that

**GUCKENHEIMER SOUR KRAUT BAND CREATOR,
COMPOSER and DIRIGENT,
EAU-DE-VIE COLORIST, BEST-CELLERY-for-TWO,
MERCHANT PRINCE, and CITOYEN DU MONDE**

RICHARD BENNY BOY GUMP
ALIAS, CAPTAIN BLIGH

DESERVES AND RECEIVES THE ULTIMATE TITLES OF

TERRESTRIAL MARINE BIOLOGIST
SCIENTIST HONORIS CAUSA

**CONNOISSEUR of the LANDS and the WATERS BETWEEN
ANGKOR and the ONE-LEGGED-CHICKEN INN**

**IN RECOGNITION OF
HAVING PUT UC BERKELEY ON THE MAP IN THE SOUTH SEAS
AD MULTOS ANNOS, AMICUS**

Werner Loher

**Werner Loher
R. B. Gump South Pacific Biological
Research Station, Moorea**

I FAMILY, CHILDHOOD, EDUCATION

[Interview 1: June 12, 1987]##

Religion

Riess: You were born January 22, 1906 in San Francisco. Tell me about your family. Was it the comfortable San Francisco Jewish middle class?

Gump: Not the Jewish necessarily. I was brought up where I never thought anything about whether I was Jewish or Gentile or what. I just thought I was one of the guys. Then my brother Robert and I moved from public school, it was Grant School here, to Potter School which was something like the Urban School. It was a place where the "better society" family kids went.

I never thought about being Jewish, but I remember going up to boys' camp, in 1918 that was, and for some reason or another some guy said, "Hey Gump, you're Jewish?" I said, "Yes." I hadn't ever thought, am I Jewish or what? But there were guys there who were anti-Semites! And I'll never forget playing in the yard at Potter School before classes or before the bell rang, whatever, and this guy pushed my head in the sand. He said, "That's for you, you sheenie." Okay, fine. I mean, what the hell did I do? Okay, I'm sheenie. I didn't know, I never heard the expression until this guy came along. But he and I later became great friends in San Francisco.

Riess: You didn't feel Jewish?

Gump: No. My brother was confirmed; I wasn't even confirmed. I never had a Bar Mitzvah.

Riess: Your father, Abraham Livingston Gump [1869-1947], had his religious upbringing been more orthodox? Did the Gumps attend temple?

Gump: Mother's father [Benjamin Harris Lichtenstein] did whenever he could, and I don't know about my father's father [Solomon Gump]. My

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 171.

Gump: father did on special days, but in general no. My grandfather [Solomon Gump] at one time got some property down in Kern County. And he got it with the idea that maybe he would make a Jewish home, a future Jewish home, because you know the Jews were wandering all over at that time. There was no Israel at that time. I'm talking about before the turn of the century. But it turned out this was oil property. We didn't get any oil on it but leased the mineral rights to various oil companies over the years. Getty had a lease on it for a while.

My maternal grandfather didn't look Jewish at all--he was a blue-eyed German. He could be part of the German general staff, or something, a Junker-type. My mother was half-Irish Catholic. I asked one of these Catholic fathers who was a historian at the University of San Francisco about the name Pendergast, my maternal grandmother's maiden name. He said, "Oh, Pendergast, that's not a Celt name. It's Norman." I said, "Wonderful!" I didn't know. If the Pendergasts are Norman, then we're higher-bred, I think. Of course, the Normans evidently--when the Scots pushed over into northern Ireland, you see, they fought the Celts. (I guess the Kilties fought the Celts. [laughs])

But getting back to that, I never felt particularly Jewish. If there's a Jewish cause, I'll be glad to help. But I didn't go out of my way because a guy was Jewish. There are "professional Jews," which I hate. Or professional blacks. I told Jerri Lange one time--she talked about being black and I said, "For God's sake, don't be a professional black." I don't like that, because you only segregate yourself. Why segregate yourself? Do you see what I mean? [Jerri Lange is a television producer/writer who did interviews on Channel 9 in San Francisco. She is the mother of Ted Lange who was the bartender on the "Love Boat" tv series.]

Riess: Yes.

Gump: The only thing I'm snobbish about is intellect. Because I can't be bothered with people who are bores.

Grandparents

Riess: Tell me more about your mother, Mabel Beatrice Lichtenstein [1878-1934]. Her father was Benjamin Harris Lichtenstein.

Gump: We called him "Gar-Gar Benny." He was a marvelous character, one of the greatest guys I ever knew. We spent summers with him. He had a beautiful piece of property over in San Rafael, six acres on Locust Avenue by the Dominican convent. He bought the property finally. I used to walk downtown with him and his wife [Frances Davis], my mother's stepmother. Sometimes as I would walk away from his place

Gump: I could hear the piano playing. But I liked to take the other route to town because the S & A Studio girls were there, all in makeup. I didn't know it; I thought, gee, they're wonderful. And I was pretty young, but it shows that there's such a thing as sex when you're very young.

Riess: What studio?

Gump: S & A Studio. Before Hollywood, S & A Studio was in San Rafael. I'm talking about 1909-1912, I guess.

Riess: And it was a movie studio?

Gump: Oh yes.

Riess: And what was your mother's father's background?

Gump: He was born in St. Louis in 1848. Then nobody knows where he was for twenty or thirty years. He finally ended up in San Francisco, and in 1900 retired with a million bucks. Boom--he just stopped making money. He had a hock shop on Third Street, I think it was.

He taught me about judging people. I was just a kid; I was thirteen when he died. He called me "Benny boy" because my middle name was Benjamin, named after him. And he used to tell me things like, "Now, when you're walking down the street look at people and wonder what they're like, what they're thinking and all that." I realized afterwards he got to know people so well, when they wanted to borrow money or something, he could judge people inside-out and backwards. Evidently he adored me; that's what my mother said. I learned an awful lot from him about people. And imagine, he died when I was only thirteen.

I remember he said, "Now, here's a book that shows you about people's characters. Look at a person's hands. If there are holes between them, it means they can't keep money." Well, of course, in those days they used to have that sort of belief. And do you know what happened? My grandfather had told me about this. I was down on the first floor of the store doing the Christmas scene. (My brother and I used to go to work around Christmastime.) I was down there and my father said, "Take your hands out of your pocket!"

I said, "Why do you have to speak to me like a slave driver?"

He said, "Why are you calling me that?"

I said, "Because Grandpa Benny said that people with ears pinned back are slave-driver-types, and you're a slave-driver type." Oh geez, he was mad! But that's how I got that, from my mother's father.

following p. 3

Solomon Gump and his grandson Richard, 1906.

Gump: Dad had a bad habit of being very terse and bossy. So between his roughness and his very powerful verbose voice--he had a marvelous voice--and my mother being very excitable, I all my life have played down everything. In fact, even when I shot myself I saved my life because I was so calm--or the Boy Scouts saved my life, because the guy with me [Ray Lichtenberg] hadn't been to Boy Scouts--and blood was pouring out of my leg, and I said, "Let me have a handkerchief." He said, "You can't do anything." I said, "I want to tie a tourniquet." He said, "What the hell is that?" I said, "I don't know, just give me the handkerchief." So I tied a tourniquet around and saved my life. And then he was going to carry me. I said, "No, don't carry me."

In other words--I don't want to go into detail, but I was very calm about the whole thing, even though the blood was pouring out. And they said that if it was a quarter of an inch deeper I would have hit the main artery and I would have killed myself right there. I would have bled to death right on the spot. I still have some of that [calmness]. In fact, when people say to me, "For Christ's sake, hurry up! You've got lead in your ass," I say, "Yes, I have an x-ray to prove it."

Riess: Did you go over and spend summers in San Rafael?

Gump: Oh, yes, every summer I was over there. It was the last house on Locust Avenue.

Riess: What was the influence of Solomon Gump, your father's father, on your life?

Gump: Well, he liked my brother and me very much. I remember he had this slightly German accent, although Sidney Schwartz, my cousin, said he never had a German accent. But I remember he said, "Mein Robert und Mein Richard." And I thought of him as "Gaga with the slobbery kisses." Well, the reason was because he had a stroke and it paralyzed part of his mouth, you see. So that was "Gaga with the slobbery kisses." That was Solomon Gump.

Riess: Did the larger family gather around often? The Lafayette Gumps and Alfred Gumps and all these other Gumps?

Gump: Yes. Later on, you see, when my father moved, when he separated from my mother, he lived down at the Palace Hotel with his sister, Goldina Swabacker. She lived there, and Alfred Gump lived there, so they used to be together, and Will used to come down there. They met every Sunday evening. I used to be there. That's why I never learned to play bridge, because of these uncles and aunts screaming at each other. You know, "Why did you do that? Why did you lead with this?" and all that sort of thing. I can't play cards if I

Gump: have to be screamed at like that, you know. Of course, it was a sibling scream. I mean, you can be pretty noisy, I don't care whether you're Jewish or Gentile or what.

Riess: It sounds like a fairly hot-tempered bunch.

Gump: Well, it was not so much temper. It was just, "Why did you lead with your ace when you know damned well I gave you the signal for such-and-such?!" I mean, my God, if that's fun I don't want any part of it. I didn't mind playing poker. I could hold my end up with my father, see. And my brother played absolutely crazily! I remember one time at Tahoe my brother did some crazy raise that was impossible. My father could still see the cards fairly well and he said, "Robert, for God's sake, never play poker." But I kept up with my father pretty well.

The Violin

Riess: When you and your brother and sister were growing up together, did you eat meals with your parents or were you segregated?

Gump: No, at first we were separate. We didn't dine with them in the evening until my brother got long pants and I guess I got long pants at the same time. Then we would dine with my mother and father. If they had guests then we would, depending on who the guests were. Otherwise, my sister and my brother and I would dine separately with a governess.

Riess: So you had a governess?

Gump: Oh, yes. She was a very brilliant person. She ended up head of the Irwin Blood Bank. Kathleen Curtis. She was a graduate of the Dublin Conservatory of Music, and when I played the violin later we used to play together. She played the piano beautifully.

But I couldn't stand the darned violin, and I want to find out from [Isaac] Stern and other violinists who the hell twisted the violinist's wrist. That's so unnatural. You can't get a vibrato! Oh, you can if you work hard enough at it. I still want to know who broke the arms of the violin player. I've gone through ancient sculptures. For instance, on Chartres Cathedral I see them holding the thing this way [demonstrates]. They said, "Well, they couldn't rest it on their chin." And I said, "Well, why couldn't they rest it on their knee? What's the law against having a long spike on the bottom of the thing to hold it this way." [demonstrates again] I know I would have no trouble at all on the vibrato, just like on the cello, no trouble at all.

Riess: If you go back through art you can see a time when it changed?

Gump: I'm trying to trace that. I want to ask Stern, because he's quite a bright guy. I have to remind him--one time he drove me home from Berkeley, before he was famous. He's a very nice guy, and a great violinist. And I remember he and I were talking baseball most of the time--he's a baseball nut, too.

But I quit violin because I couldn't stand it. I could hear guys playing ball out in the street, and I bit a hole in the back of my violin I got so mad playing it. Literally. So my mother said, "I guess you'd better not play the violin.

Riess: You bit a hole in it?

Gump: In the back of the violin, yes, where the chin rest is. I got so mad. I would hear that sound of the bat drop out in the street. It's like in football, hearing a person punt, you know, for a kick, you hear that sound. And then I heard that and I just couldn't stand it!

Mother, Dramatics

Riess: But the music side of your life did come from your mother's family, the musical interest?

Gump: Oh, she appreciated it. She studied voice at one time. My father said her voice was terrible. Maybe he was exaggerating, I don't know, it wasn't Tetrazzini. But my mother was so good as an amateur actress that they wanted to give her a contract on Broadway. That's when Broadway was big. They had quite a few theaters going in those days. Of course, she decided she couldn't do that because we were growing up and they didn't want to neglect the children.

Riess: You mean she tried out?

Gump: Well, at the Little Theater. Reginald Travers--you've probably heard of him, he was very famous at the Bohemian Club because he used to run all the big shows, and he also was the director of this little theater, you see.

Riess: In San Francisco?

Gump: Yes.

Riess: What was it called?

Gump: It was called "the little Theater."

rue Story of American Girl Who Married Filipino [illegible]

San Francisco Call & Post, Monday, September 1, 1924

Magazine Page

arrying Filipino

ll It to ELSIE—Written by SIE ROBINSON AND HER PALS

ne Girl's Story Told

UMPKIN" wanted to know if she should marry her Filipino lover. I merely asked for opinions—I did not take sides. I'm not taking sides now, even though I'm going to point out some fallacies in the following letter:

Dear Miss Robinson—This letter has reference to "Lumpkin," who is doubtful as to whether or not she should marry her Filipino admirer. I believe, Miss Robinson, that I am in an exceptionally fine position to answer her rightfully and without casting any reflection of racial hatred on the gentleman in question.

As the daughter of an army officer, I spent practically five years of my life in the Philippines, seeing life there as it really is. Now, I wish you would please try and publish this letter in entirety, for "Lumpkin's" sake; or perhaps, if you have her address, you would care to forward it to her.

"Lumpkin," please, Oh! please, do not marry the Filipino! Here is my reason:

The Filipinos are a most suave, polite, polished people on the outside and away from their native country. They will slave and cater to your wants and s if they like you, and the men are "fascinating" for some women. l this while away from the islands and their natural surroundings. ever, I will quote one of the cases of marriages between can girls and Filipino men. In ngton, D. C., quite a few years my sister's chum—a girl of ment and culture, became ac- ed with and married a Fili- f wealth, education and attrac- ppearance, who was attending e at our nation's capital. told her of his parents—their , their lovely home in the s; what a wonderful life they lead, his friends, etc.—and she t regret her step at that time. of her acquaintances turned willing one though—and my husband has turned back to his native haunts and ways. He is a Filipino again, not the educated man of wealth I married in Washington, D. C. His code is another time-worn adage which is more easily said than done—'When in Rome do as the Romans do.'

"The Americans and other whites here will not make friends with me. They think I have disgraced myself and when I think of what I was formerly, I agree with them. My children hold me back also. I

Society by Madame Chic

Society Rushes Out of Town to Spend Week-end and Holiday

AS today is a holiday following the weekend, the city is deserted socially and is as dull as it was during midsummer, with a large number of San Franciscans at Del Monte and scores of house parties being given down the peninsula.

Yesterday society gathered at the San Mateo Polo Club for a game between the reds and whites. William S. Tevis was captain of the reds and the others were W. W. Crocker, George Gordon Moore and Archibald Johnson. The opposing team was composed of Thomas Driscoll, C. G. Whitney, Lawrence McCreery and Lewis G. Carpenter.

The veranda and clubrooms presented a colorful picture at tea time, with members entertaining guests informally.

Many Gatherings At Del Monte

Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Forsman, Mr. and Mrs. Willis Walker, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hunter and many others whose homes are at Pebble Beach are entertaining groups of friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer H. Cox will open their home at the attractive resort and will entertain guests during the coming golf tournament. Mr. and Mrs. William Orrick are hoping that their new home will be completed in time for the tournament; but if it is not ready for occupancy they will stay at Del Monte Lodge.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Taylor gave a dinner Saturday evening at their home in Menlo Park at which [illegible] Mr. and Mrs.

Mrs. Mabel Gump, who takes one of the leading parts in "Fashion," which will be given at the Players Club, in Bush street, September 3.

Little Theater player.

LIST

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DULLNESS. HEAVINESS

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Riess: Just the Little Theater?

Gump: I believe so. Anyway, they got an old church on Bush Street, between Octavia and Gough, I guess it is. And there was a church there that was converted into a theater. It was very nice. I remember seeing some Shakespeare, and they did Gilbert and Sullivan quite often there. And she was in "Ruddigore." [Mr. Gump explains pronunciation of "Ruddigore," its relationship to the expression "Bloody," and "Bloody's" blasphemous origins.]

My mother was the lead in quite a few things.* She did a very famous show called "Big Kate," which was a one-act play. She had the part of Catherine the Great, and I'll never forget how inauthentic the costume was. She had on a Russian costume. (Maybe I can find a picture of it; in fact, I know where I have one. And she's got this big Russian thing.) But Catherine the Great came from Germany to start with, and if ever there was a francophile, she was one. She was nuts about the French, everything French. As you know, she got Voltaire over there, and Diderot, and all those people went over to see her, Catherine the Great. So she wasn't so hot about Russia.

Anyway, my mother did this part, a very famous show. And then this guy was going to make a three-act play of it, and she was offered the lead on Broadway. She was that good, that she would get an offer for a lead on Broadway. And she was always interested in the theater. She was a marvelous mimic.

Home Environment

Riess: At home did you see that side of her?

Gump: Oh, she would do it. But the trouble was I grew up with my father and my mother both being very, very strong characters, each one trying to hold the fort, being the lead. And it was a tough thing to grow up with. I remember I used to go home in the evening and I would feel pretty hungry and I would think, how nice, we'll sit down

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*Parts played by Mabel Gump in local theater: Bush Street Theater in Knoblock's "Big Kate"; leading part in "Fashion" (ca. 1845) at Players Club, Sept. 3, 1924; Katisha in "The Mikado"; Mad Margaret in "Ruddigore," an infrequently attempted Gilbert & Sullivan musical in which she sang "Only Roses"; "Catherine of Russia," and for this performance in 1920 she was offered 26 weeks on the Keith-Albee Circuit but A. L. Gump said, according to Robert Gump's notes, "No American gentleman would permit his wife on the professional stage."

Gump: and have a nice dinner. then they would get in an argument and it would spoil my whole meal. I mean, I remember looking forward to it, and then there would be an argument with these two terribly strong characters. Both of them were very, very dynamic people. Anyway, maybe that's why I pulled in my shell a great deal. When things got tough, I never got excited. It worked backwards; I'd get cooler. Probably in the long run it was lucky that I got that way. My brother was excitable. (My sister was such a selfish person, I won't even mention much about her.)

Riess: Were you and your brother close because of this?

Gump: Oh yes, he and I were very close. We never had any terrible fights or anything like that, or any jealousies. It's funny; he always was proud of my being able to draw and that sort of thing. Whereas he used to make little drawings, he said, "There's the artist." I was "the artist," see.

Riess: That labeling happens in families, doesn't it?

Gump: It's not right because there's no reason why he shouldn't try drawing. I'd say, "Why don't you do it?" And he'd say, "Oh, you go ahead and make the drawing, you're the architect."

I remember while he was going to Harvard I used his room as a studio upstairs. And I used to do plans every weekend and every morning. I got up at 5:30 in the morning. By 6:00 I was drawing, and from 6:00-7:00 I would do an architectural drawing. My mother and father awoke right on the dot of 7:00, so then I went down and practiced the piano, from 7:00-8:00. By 8:00 I was up and running to school--Potter School is at the corner of Gough and Pacific, so I would practically run there anyway. And then I would play in the yard there and had a lot of fun, whatever sport was in that season. I always enjoyed that. So yes, I had quite a full life; I enjoyed an awful lot and accomplished an awful lot.

Riess: Your mother was probably torn by that offer, but she chose to stay and be a mother. Do you think that was a very hard decision for her?

Gump: Well, she waited until 1925 to separate from my father. She and my sister went to Europe. Because I was ill I was back here with my father; my brother was at Harvard at that time, but I was living with my father at the Palace Hotel. When my mother came back we stayed at the Fairmont. She had a marvelous suite there at the Fairmont with terrific furniture. I remember the Bishop of Malaga's bed, a big Spanish bed. That suite at the Fairmont was on the second floor, southeast corner of the Fairmont. There was a living room about the size of this at least.

Riess: And she furnished it?

Gump: Oh yes, she had bought all the stuff in Spain. In fact, I have one thing left—I'll show you--that she bought for me, Cordovan leather chest (circa 1600).

Riess: Did she have as good an eye for things as your father?

Gump: Oh yes, marvelous. She had the appreciation. The story about my mother is that she's the one, she told me herself, she said, "You know, I literally on my bended knee begged your father to hire Mr. [Ed] Newell." She used to go to Chinatown where he had this little shop, and he would explain to her about these Oriental wares and got her fascinated. At the same time she also was a protegè of the lady who discovered Picasso, Sally Stein.* And so Sally Stein was trying to tell her how interesting these things by Matisse were. In later years Sally Stein said to me, "Oh, I remember you in your little dresses." I was then the head of the gallery! I said, "Well, I didn't wear dresses!" But they dressed kids that way in those days, when boys were about two or three.

Riess: Leo Stein was one member of the Stein family, and then there was Gertrude, of course.

Gump: Well, that's the sister of Leo. Sally was married to Michael Stein. And she got my mother interested in art. I met her later. She moved back to Palo Alto. Mr. Newell told me she was there. He was still alive then so we went to see her. I said, "You were a pioneer in a lot of things. How did you happen to use Corbusier as an architect?" And she said, "Well, he gave me his ideas; I thought they were rather interesting. I said, 'Build me a house.'" That got Corbusier going, to say nothing of Matisse and a few names like that that you've probably heard of a few times.

Riess: But you are saying your mother was very important in influencing the direction of the whole store.

Gump: Oh, absolutely. Just as an example: Alfred [Gump], I always liked him. He was an awfully nice guy, and he was always very generous. But he was a wonderful malaprop. You can quote me on that one. He would say, "Now, I want you to go into the Italian room and look at the Christ on Cavalry [Calvary]." I thought, well, he got it mixed up with a western. Or he would say, "Well, go up and see Christ in Yosemite [Gethsemane]."

Gump: [Added later] To explain why I admired my Uncle Alfred more than my father I should probably tell two stories. I went to Istanbul on a buying trip. I was only twenty-two years old, I think. And it

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*See also Elise Stern Haas, The Appreciation of Quality, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, 1979.

Gump: turned up in the accounting back in San Francisco that I had spent an awful lot of money down there. Stanley Corcoran said, "You'd better speak to your uncle about this. He knows you've been spending an awful lot of money. Why don't you explain?"

Well I did tell him that I had had a very good time. I felt no remorse or anything. I hired a yacht, went out in the middle of the Sea of Marmara, which is right off Istanbul, with a couple of girls from a brothel and fellows from our office. I spent quite a lot of money there. So I explained the whole thing to my uncle.

"Well," he said, in a very nasal voice, "I don't mind you spending money on girls--who wouldn't at your age? It's the idea that you're spending so much money--you must have been very drunk. You shouldn't spend so much money drinking!"

I said, "Yes, I realize that, Uncle Alfred."

And he said, "Well, as long as you've explained to me where that big bill came from, from the Istanbul office, as long as I know about it." And that was all that was ever said about it. He never mentioned that again. He didn't even act as if I had done wrong.

On the other hand, here's my father. (This does not affect me.) Always he was telling my brother, "That terrible deal you made with Milton Esberg! You lost so much money trading a motorcycle with him." Always negative, negative, negative. He didn't know anything else. Probably it was the contrast between my uncle and his brother, my father, that made me realize the nice person my Uncle Alfred was, unlike my father, who would never let bygones be bygones.

As my father got older, and when I was made General Manager, I said to him, "You have to work through me," and after that he relaxed and he wasn't such a martinet. I think it relaxed him." [End of addition]

Father's Blindness, and Voice##

Riess: How blind was your father?

Gump: Oh, this is a great story. I think we have to put this in there. Some woman asked that very question who came to work at Gump's. She was a woman who was a terrific wit and she said, "Tell me how blind is the elder Gump." I said, "Well, I'll tell you how blind he is. You take a handful of nickels and drop them off the balcony to the first floor and he'll go down and find every one. That's how blind he is." Because he could see fairly well then. The trouble

Gump: is, his eyes got worse and worse and worse, and finally he was totally blind. He had glaucoma. Of course, today they can fix it with laser beams, I understand, that sort of operation. His father took him to the top man in New York to look at his eyes, but he couldn't do anything for him. So he had to quit school—I think that's in the book.*

Riess: Lafayette, the brother, was really blind.

Gump: Yes, he was.

Riess: And your father's blindness--in Carol Wilson's book, she says that the trauma of your mother's departure "sent him into utter darkness."

Gump: You mean it affected his sight.

Riess: Yes. I thought she meant it literally.

Gump: Not that I know of. I don't think so, because I remember I bought a whole bunch of Old Masters in 1930 when I went to Europe. And he would look at them closely, like this, you see. [Mr. Gump demonstrates] And he would say, "Well, I don't know about this. That looks like a nice Van Dyke." I remember he would look at it. Nobody was telling him. And that was in 1930. My mother had separated in '25 or '26, I don't know exactly. Maybe you can find out exactly.

Riess: It also in the book said that he had to memorize information about the look of works of art, that he had to be told by other people.**

Gump: Oh yes, it was amazing. I can tell you a story about that, if you want to get on that subject.

Riess: I was just interested, when you were a child, in what it was like to have a father who was in some way functionally blind.

Gump: Well, we weren't conscious of his poor sight. He walked quite well; he loved to walk. He loved to go out to the beach and walk the whole length of the beach, from the Cliff House all the way down to the end there. I hated walking.

Riess: So there was no way that he needed—he didn't lean on you and Robert because of his blindness. He didn't need you to guide him?

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*Gump's Treasure Trade, by Carol Green Wilson. Crowell Co., Publ., N.Y., 1965.

**Wilson, op. cit., pp. 191, 192.

Gump: No, no. Oh, he used to ask me to drive for him. And I think he felt that I was better at the wheel than my brother. My brother would step on the brake too fast, that sort of thing--I knew how he drove so it didn't bother me, but it would have bothered somebody who didn't see well. I'm always careful of how I drive, definitely for myself, alone. When I have passengers I think, fine, let them see what I'm going to do. I don't suddenly step on my brake unless there's an emergency.

I remember there was quite an earthquake when we were living at the Palace. At that time across the street I remember some big plate glass windows broke. It was maybe up to 4 or 5 on the Richter scale. He said, "Well, let's go out for a drive." I had my car right there, I remember I had a Chrysler roadster, so we went for a drive in this sportscar. Well, now, he wouldn't have asked me to take him for a drive if I was a lousy driver. It just occurs to me now.

Riess: Okay, so it wasn't a big thing in your life, your father being blind?

Gump: Well, no, having poor sight, let's put it that way. Oh yes, later on he couldn't see, period.

Riess: I think there was a time when he went off with Mr. Newell for five months or something, to the Orient?

Gump: That's right.

Riess: Then did the whole tenor of the household change? It was much easier to be there without him?

Gump: He went away in 1917. Let's see, I was at Grant School before I went to Potter's. No, I don't remember any particular difference, because we didn't dine at the table with him or anything like that. My mother was very interested in theater then, too, you see.

Riess: So she was away a lot, too?

Gump: Yes, and then during the First World War there was this canteen, they called it, down on Lombard. And a bunch of soldiers were going through to Vladivostok, particularly Belgians. And I remember they had to have her because she spoke French. See, my mother spoke, read, and wrote four languages.

Riess: Do you think when they married that it was a great love match?

Gump: Oh, yes, it was, definitely. My mother said, "Your father had more sex appeal than any man I ever met." That's a nice thing to say.

Riess: Yes, it's great!

Gump: He had a beautiful voice, too. He had a marvelous speaking voice.

Riess: You mentioned that, yes. What was the quality of it? Tell me about it.

Gump: Well, it was just a beautiful rounded voice. The funny thing is he didn't speak French, but he would get in a restaurant in Paris with my mother--and he had a marvelous ear--and he would say, "Garçon!" He acted like a Frenchman, he looked like a Frenchman, he had a moustache. And the waiter would say, "Oui, monsieur, qu'est-ce que vous desirez?" And he would say, "What did he say, Mother?" (He always called my mother, Mother.) And the waiter would think, "What's the matter with this guy? I thought he was French!" Because he had such a fast ear. He could tell stories, too. Don't kid yourself. Why do you think he was such a great salesman?

Interests - Music and Baseball

Riess: I liked your description of yourself getting up in the morning and doing your architectural drawings and your piano practice, and so on. I wonder what kinds of books you read as a boy?

Gump: I didn't read very much. I wasn't an avid reader until lately. I've been reading an awful lot down in the South Seas. My brother did a lot of reading, and I would listen to what he and my mother would discuss about books, I would drink in what they were saying. People would think I read a lot; I didn't, I was more creative; I wanted to be drawing or something, playing the piano.

Another thing, I realize why I never was a good musician--not counting the great Guckenheimer's Band, see. I couldn't read well because I'd anticipate too much.

Riess: What do you mean?

Gump: I would see an F# but I would feel it should be an F, so I would play an F. And it wasn't an F, it was an F#. You see I would anticipate because I was creative, instead of just being a cold-blooded reader. And that makes a lousy reader. But I did have a nice touch on the piano, I can say that. I can sit down at the piano and you'll think, "Geez, this guy must play beautifully." I've lost all my technique, though.

Riess: When did they start you on piano and art and all of that?

Gump: Oh, when I was five or six, something like that. I remember I had this old Dutch man, a Hollander, who taught me one time. And then--this is interesting, this occured from this early training—years

Gump: later Reah Sedowsky introduced me to Antonio deGrassi who for years belonged to the Bohemian Club. I said, "Oh, Reah, Mr. deGrassi taught me the violin." And he said, "No, I didn't teach you the violin. I gave you lessons. Nobody taught you the violin." I said, "That's true, that's the wrong word to say you taught me." He kidded me about that.

In fact he played my violin and piano sonata at a concert in a hall on Washington Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Polk Street. And there was a big audience for that concert. Seven people! I have to tell you about that. There were only seven people because it was three days after Pearl Harbor, and everybody was scared to go out. My father and my mother's stepmother--my mother had died, you see, in 1934 or 1935. And Miss Curtis, my mother's stepmother's companion.

But that's a funny one about learning the violin. He worked like hell on me. He even had his wife come over and give me lessons.

Riess: Because you really wanted to be good?

Gump: Well, I never should have taken the violin. That's the great mistake. If I had taken the cello, by God, I'd be playing great cello right now. Because I would get a vibrato on the cello. I write very well for cello. In fact I write so well people think I play the instrument.

Riess: And the piano?

Gump: That was before I took up the violin. I told you I made a hole in my violin so my mother said, "I don't think you want to do that." Later on my mother's stepmother paid for me to take jazz piano lessons at the Christianson School of Music. [imitates rhythm] That was in 1920, wonderful rhythm in those days.

Riess: And how about the art lessons?

Gump: I went to Saturday classes at the Mark Hopkins Hotel [California School of Fine Arts]. The school was right there, you see, before they built the hotel.

Riess: Was it uncommon for a boy to be doing all of this artistic stuff?

Gump: Well, it was a matter of enjoyment as far as I was concerned. I enjoyed this stuff, the same as I enjoyed playing baseball.

Riess: You did both?

Gump: Oh sure. I ended up playing golf fairly well, until I hurt myself, slipped in Paris and broke my femur. But I got fairly good at golf. At Lake Merced, even though it had the smallest greens in northern

Gump: California, I was a 12-handicap there for ten years, which isn't bad. The funny thing is I would go over to other courses and I would ask the pro, "How is it?"--this is still going back to what I was able to do--"How is it I get on these strange courses, I'm on the green, and here I have a hell of a time down there?" He said, "Don't you know these are the smallest greens in northern California?" And here I'd been playing the damn course for ten years and never knew it!

But to get back to it, like all kids I would have a baseball and slam it against the wall and imagine I'm playing shortstop or second. And just like all kids, I had a picture of myself as a baseball player, never a pitcher, I never thought I was a pitcher. I didn't have enough speed. My hero was Ping Bodie, who was the centerfielder for the Seals. He came from Cow Hollow in San Francisco. Then he went out and played for Detroit, I think it was, the big leagues. Then he became an umpire. He was in the National League. I'll look him up. I have a great big book here.

Riess: You took baseball seriously.

Gump: I identified with them, thought maybe I could be a ball player someday. At the same time a fellow ran a gymnasium that a lot of kids went to where I learned to box starting at five years old. He was the son of Wieniawski, the famous violin composer. And so he introduced me to Mischa Elman. So that was also another ideal. But baseball overtook the violin.

I'll tell you what happened to Wieniawski. (Everybody called him Mr. Wienie.) He had a wonderful group of boys learning to box, and athletics. I remember I learned something about epees and sabers and stuff. (There's another thing that came in handy years later, and I've forgotten where. [laughs])

But sometime during the First World War, I think it was 1917, something like that, he made an anti-Semitic remark. He was Polish, you see, an upper-class Pole. And word got around and the Jews pulled all the kids out of the gym. I remember I went to a concert and here he is there. He recognized me and I recognized him but I wouldn't talk to him because of the schism built up. He did this and so the Jewish people cut him out. He lost half the kids going there.

Riess: It got around.

Gump: I don't really know what he said or anything like that. It was anti-Semitic.

Riess: Did you have to account each day to your father for what you'd done that day? Did he care?

Gump: Oh, yes. He would say, "What did you do today?" And I would say, "Oh, we practiced baseball," or "We practiced football," or "We played basketball." I was in all three sports. Those are the only ones they had at Potter's.

Riess: Your father cared a lot about sports too, didn't he?

Gump: Oh, yes. And the funny thing—they were talking just the other day during one of the games about the early days of baseball, when you could tell the pitcher where you wanted the ball pitched. I remember my father telling me that when he was young he said you could say, "I want a high ball," or "I want it down by my knees." Imagine, they used to tell the pitcher that. And if he didn't throw it there, you got a ball! Imagine how easy it was for the batters!

I remember my brother and I went to watch the old Seals play out in Recreation Park with my father. He took the two of us to the ball game; that was about 1912, I think. He could see it fairly well. He could listen to it. He knew everything that was going on, listening to it. In fact [my secretary] Mrs. Graham's brother-in-law, Roy Nicely, was one of the greatest shortstops that we've ever seen around here, one of the shortstops for the Seals.

Riess: You mentioned the person who introduced you to Antonio deGrassi was Reah Sedowsky?

Gump: Yes. She just had a concert here. She's a concert pianist, a great pianist. The two of them were working on my violin and piano sonata.

Potter School Connections

Riess: Were you close to any of the Potter School teachers?

Gump: Yes, sure. One of them didn't like me very well. I don't know why. He liked my brother but he didn't like me. We called him "Dido," like Dido con forme from the Aeneid. We'd kid him and call him "Dido with the beautiful shape," see. That's what the kids called him. He actually was George Rolfe Humphries and wrote a very long, epic poem about baseball that was in an Untermeyer anthology that anyone interested in poetry would know.

Did I tell you how I bumped into Louis Untermeyer, the great anthologizer? It was a real triple coincidence, if you can say such a thing. I was on my way between Rome and Florence, driving along the coast road. And my agent said, "If you're going that way you might want to stop off in Tarquinia." Tarquinia is where the best collection of Estruscan art is. They've got the best examples in

Gump: the museum and they're also down below, in these caverns. They found all these places dug under the fields, you know, because it was level at one time, I guess.

Anyway, here was this fellow who had on what looked like a Texas tie [bolo], talking to his wife in a very erudite way, in a very Ivy League voice. Well, it was blowing terribly outside, after we left the place, and he turned to his wife and said, "Once more unto the breach, dear friends," this quote from Shakespeare. I said, "Oh, Henry V!" When we got out above in the wind he turned and said, "Would you like to join us for lunch?" I said, "Yes, I'd love to."

I sat down at the table and said, "I'm probably fairly well known," and I handed him a card. And then he said, "Well, I'm fairly well known," and he hands me his card. Then I'm talking music talk and I said, "Well, you know, I traveled with Louis Armstrong from Bavaria [Selb] where the Rosenthal factory is. He gave me a lift down to Munich." He said, "Well, that's a coincidence, I just did a jacket for his last record." Then we started talking about lecture circuits, and we found we had the same agent! Isn't that funny?

Riess: That is, that's amazing.

Gump: And then he told me about this neck thing. He said it was a gizzard or something out of a prehistoric animal that he had some documentation about. It looked like some sort of Arizona souvenir of a rock or something but it wasn't at all. He told me it was a gizzard. Later on I saw him, he was coming through here to lecture, and Peter Stackpole, the photographer, wanted to meet him so we went to meet him out at the airport. And I said, "I always have a Life photographer drive me around." [laughter]

Riess: Mortimer Fleishhacker went to Potter School. Was he in your class?

Gump: Yes. He was very good at mathematics and his mathematics served him quite well later, I'm pretty sure, because I know when he died he left a lot more than when he first went into business!

Riess: And who else was in your class? Was it full of later successful San Franciscans?

Gump: Well, there's Willie Dohrmann. He left that company and I haven't seen him for years, Willie. I understand he's doing watercolors too. He always drew rather well when we were in school together.

I could name a whole bunch of them--Pete Folger of the coffee clan.

Riess: Mr. Fleishhacker said in his interview that it was a school for wealthy kids, and they made sure that you got through.* No one ever failed.

Gump: That's true. But in those days you would get a recommendation to either Cal or Stanford, that was all. You didn't have to worry about college boards. I took the college board exes because I wanted to go to MIT. I wanted to study architecture.

Riess: And what happened about that?

Gump: I shot myself.

My mother had a wonderful wristwatch that she had bought and I remember she said, "Here, I was going to give you this when you go to Exeter." I was going east to Exeter the next year. Then I shot myself, so I was back to Potter's, I didn't get to Exeter. I remember looking forward to going to Exeter because I noticed they had a band or some little orchestra as well as having sports and all that stuff. And I checked with a couple of guys who went to Potter and also were going to Exeter. I think one of them was Giannini of the Bank of America fame. One guy who went to Potter, his family owned the Island of Nihau in the Islands--you know, that one that's owned by the Robinson family? Well, one of the Robinsons was in there with me. If I was to mention all the people who are important around this neck of the woods that went to Potter School--.

Riess: So was that an important connection for you, would you say, in later life, that you had been at Potter School?

Gump: Sometimes. Sometimes, but very often my wives weren't accepted by that society.

Riess: Your wives weren't accepted by the Potter society?

Gump: Yes, by my Potter schoolmates' wives, I guess.

Riess: Did you have some best friends as a boy?

Gump: Oh, sure. One in 1917 was Malcolm Dewees. He was well-known in advertising for years. He just died a few years ago.

Riess: Was he from Potter School days?

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*Mortimer Fleishhacker, Family, Business, and the San Francisco Community, Regional Oral History Office, 1975, p. 9.

Gump: Yes, I met him at Potter School. His family originally came from Sacramento and they moved down here. Anyway, he and I were pals for years. I would see him once in a while. Then he lived over in Sausalito when I lived over there, and I used to go and see him. His wife, she's a psychiatrist and she worked at Cal. When the students have a hell of a time with their exes [exams] then she would help them out, you know, emotionally. I mean, not for a nervous breakdown. It's almost a nervous breakdown if you're worrying about an ex, as you know.

Concordia Club

Riess: The Concordia Club—did you go there?

Gump: Oh, yes, I was one of the earliest junior members, my brother and I. And Robert Goldman whom I see here now, he's still alive, and I see him once in a while. Robert Goldman, Tommy Neubauer, Charley Rosenbaum and his brother, Paul Wolf, all those guys--we were all early members of the Concordia Club. And the Dinkelspiel brothers--no, they were older.

Riess: Was that a Jewish club?

Gump: Oh yes, it was, and that reminds me, when I moved down to Hollywood I knew Gouverneur Morris quite well, the writer--a direct descendent of Gouverneur Morris who was the ambassador to France--he lived down in southern California and he did some screen stuff once in a while and he wrote for Saturday Evening Post, or Collier's, I don't remember which. He was quite wealthy. He had some marvelous property right in Monterey, between Del Monte and Monterey itself. Anyway, Gouverneur said, "All you have to do to impress those kikes down there is"—he knew I wouldn't take that as an insult--"just tell them your grandfather is one of the founders of the earliest Jewish club on the west coast. They'll be impressed!" But I always forgot to tell them that.

Riess: Did a lot of business get done at Concordia Club also? Did they conduct the affairs of the city?

Gump: Well, I guess they did because they were wealthy Jewish guys who belonged to the club, every prominent Jewish guy.

Riess: But when you went there--

Gump: Oh no, I went just as a kid in athletics. It was on Saturday mornings, I guess when I wasn't going to the art school.

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Family Portraits

Above: A.L. Gump, 1940, and Mabel Gump, 1918.

Below: Richard, Robert, and Marcella Gump, 1910.

Mr. Gump notes:

"We were at my grandfather's place in San Rafael when my mother was expecting Marcella [born June 8, 1909]. Robert and I were playing outside and I remember seeing a buzzard flying overhead and thinking it was the stork bringing the baby. I was three and Robert was almost six. Someone came down the hill to where we were playing and said, "You have a baby sister." We said, "Tell her to come down to play with us."

Father and Son

Gump: I remember--oh, this is a story about my father seeing. This is funny. They would exhibit all the work of the kids who went to art school, Saturday classes they called it. Alice Chittenden was the very famous teacher in the Saturday classes. They had this show of the stuff and my father said, "Well, that's very nice work of yours, but my God, you've got the biggest signature in the whole place!" He could see enough to see that, through the cabinet there; he saw that my signature was so big. My mother didn't tell him, he just noticed it. That's how well he could see at one time.

That was just about 1917 or '18 I went to the classes. But I hated charcoal, and I hated these plaster casts, which every kid hates and still hates. I just didn't like the feel of charcoal.

Riess: Were you being told all along in there that you had a great talent and that you ought to pursue art?

Gump: Yes. Oh, at one time I thought of it. One time I was so annoyed at my father, in fact when I left to go to Europe in 1927, I remember getting on the train over at the Oakland Mole, you know, and saying goodbye to Dad, thinking to myself, "I hope I never see you again as long as I live."

Everything was money as far as he was concerned. It got in my hair. Money was important, but I never thought of money. Like a lot of the great fortunes that have been made by people who never thought about making money. They thought of an idea, not money itself. I'm not saying that everybody shouldn't think of money, there's no reason you shouldn't if you've a mind that can do something and create with money. Pity the poor guy who creates an idea and can't promote himself! Entrepreneurs, those people are valuable to society, whether you're under a communist society or a capitalistic society. People who have imagination and are money-conscious can help society. As long as they are not beasts and just think of money first.

Riess: But your father?

Gump: I'll give you an example. Here I am flat on my back after shooting myself in the leg, and I can hardly move for a while, see. I had all these operations and torture and everything like that. In those days you had bandages stuck to your leg and all that. This one day it was really awful, I couldn't get comfortable, it was terrible. Well, I had the best room in the house at the Dante Sanitarium on Broadway and Van Ness, a room where I could see everybody coming and going. And of course the food there was absolutely the best food in the United States. It was absolutely marvelous. Anyway, he came in to see me one time and he looked down at me and he said, "Richard,

Gump: you're costing me a fortune!" What a terrible thing to say. I found out later that year he had made clear a quarter of a million dollars, and the income tax was nothing. So do you blame me for having this hatred?

Riess: And there must have been many incidents like that.

Gump: Well, that one was the worst. I never forgot it. Although he got more tolerant and easier so there wasn't this terrible division. We got closer, and I lived with him over on the Marina, you know, until I got married—one of my shots at getting married.

Family Houses, San Francisco, Saratoga

Riess: After you had the accident, the family moved?

Gump: Yes, I couldn't get up the steps to the front door. There were sixty-four steps to the front door on Green Street.

Riess: That Green Street house was designed by Edgar Matthews, brother of the artist Arthur Matthews. Was it a very beautiful house?

Gump: Not particularly, no. My mother's father paid for it. My father didn't pay for it.

Riess: But was it a handsome house?

Gump: Not necessarily. It was a shingled house. They didn't even go into the imitation half-timber, which he did once in a while. That cost much more, so it was just plain shingles. You can see the house, it's still there. [2559 Green St.]

Riess: Was it full of beautiful things?

Gump: Well, yes, there was some terrific stuff. I remember the dining room was designed by Judson Allen. He's mentioned in the Gump's Treasure Trade. He was a head designer of furniture, a terrific guy, and he had a great influence on me because he was a wonderful designer and I loved to watch him work. I used to make sketches as he did. Maybe I can find one of my old sketch books.

I remember he designed the dining room set. We put it in. We had a set earlier that probably was better, probably a turn-of-the-century type thing, but he did a sort of an oak gothic dining room set. He just drew the thing out and it was a marvelous set as far as we knew, and very luxurious and nice. Today I would call it an

Gump: abomination but I remember when he was done I thought it was great. Probably later on somebody would look at pictures of this room and say, "Gee, what a terrible room." I don't know.

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Gump: I remember in 1917 the whole downstairs, the living room was done over completely.

Riess: Was it your mother's taste or your father's?

Gump: Oh, my mother's. My mother had great appreciation for Oriental stuff, as I mentioned. They almost got a divorce in one instance.

They had an enormous, magnificent lacquer chest that was a museum piece. It was this big Japanese lacquer, 18th century--the best lacquer work. That's when we moved over to Powell Street after I shot myself. She got that. My father had a customer, I think it was some top guy from Sweden. He said to him, "I want you to see this wonderful chest." Mr. Wheeler, I guess it was, said, "Well, Mr. Gump, it's sold." "Oh, it's sold. What a shame. What's-his-name would be so interested."

Afterwards he said, "Who was that sold to?" Wheeler said, "Mrs. Gump." Oh, geez, as soon as he came home I thought he was going to blow the place apart. My mother said, "Well, that's just too bad. You should have a few things like that at home." But he missed a sale!

He loved selling. People would walk in there--I remember this happening one time--a person walked inside with no idea of buying anything Oriental. By the time he got through with him they were starting a collection. He had such a fascinating way of talking.

He in the long run appreciated what my mother did, no question about it. He appreciated her appreciation, let's put it that way. And she had a big appreciation. She didn't draw or anything like that.

Riess: What was the Powell Street place like?

Gump: It was quite a big apartment. It was a whole half floor at 840 Powell. I remember there were three bedrooms and two big baths, and then there was a sort of back porch. My father used to sit and have people read to him. And he had his favorite canary there. He used to talk to the canary, and it would come and sit on his nose. [laughs]

Oh, and he had these goldfish that knew him. That sounds crazy but it's true. I can still remember that. He named his goldfish after us. Robert, Richard, and Marcella he named them, all three names! He would go by and he would hit the glass and they would come right over to him, but they wouldn't for anybody else. Well,

Gump: of course, he always fed them, every morning, so I don't know whether it's brilliance or whether it's just survival of the fittest, or what. Self-preservation; I guess it was another form of that. But it also built his ego, see. Just like dogs do. Dogs do that.

Riess: In fact, did you have dogs or cats?

Gump: Oh yes, sure. He liked animals and so did my mother. We've always had dogs. Not cats. Not that we disliked cats, but we just happened to have dogs. Over in San Rafael we had dogs all the time. My grandfather, who had a marvelous sense of humor, he had two dogs and he named them Useless and No Use. [chuckles] And I remember I didn't like No Use. He was a short-haired dog. But Useless was a long-haired dog; I liked him. Now isn't that funny, you can remember these little things from being a little kid.

Riess: San Rafael sounds like it was a fine place for you. What was the place in Saratoga, "The Wilderness"?

Gump: Oh, that was a marvelous place. What happened was when my grandfather died, my mother's father, he left quite a lot of money to my mother. I remember when we went down to look at that place. A well-known guy in the lumber business in Redwood City wanted to sell it. I remember my father saying, "Well, I'm afraid, Mr."—Mr. Zilch, call him--"Mr. Zilch, I'm afraid it would be a white elephant as far as we're concerned. I don't think we want it." Then my mother said, "Well, you're not going to buy it, I'm going to buy it." My grandfather had left her some dough, so she paid for the whole thing. After she paid for it he said, "You know, I made a great mistake by not buying that. I'm glad your mother bought that." It was just a marvelous place. Because he loved walking, you see, and there were ninety acres there on the Big Basin Road. And he could walk all over these places.

Riess: And so he really took time off then?

Gump: Yes, every weekend.

Riess: Every weekend?

Gump: Yes, he would take the train. The train crossed right at the stop on the road between Cupertino and Saratoga, before it continued to Los Gatos where it went over the mountains to Santa Cruz. He would get on that train around four in the evening, say a Friday evening. And whatever it took, say an hour, at 5:00 they would pick him up at the station and drive him the two-and-a-half miles up the Big Basin Road from Saratoga Crossing.

Riess: And did your mother go down there, too, as much?

Gump: Oh yes, very much. She had all kinds of interesting people there.

Reading and Writing Music

Gump: I'll never forget one thing that is interesting, about getting me interested in music. I had a piano there because I was interested in practicing things in those days. And a Dr. Henry Harris who was an old friend of the family's, I remember he sat down and played Scheherazade. Oh gee, that was so inspiring. That was wonderful. So when I took lessons that fall I asked my teacher if I couldn't learn one of the movements of that Scheherazade. She said, "I'll give you the third movement, The Prince and the Princess." Do you know that? [hums a few bars]

Riess: Yes.

Gump: Anyway, I learned that on the piano. I realized afterwards, how silly, why learn it? She didn't get in an argument with me; she didn't say, "Well, why do you want to learn a thing for orchestra?" I was so inspired by the sound of Rimsky-Korsakoff that she said, "That's a good idea. Learn that." At the same time I think I was studying a Schubert march and a Chopin waltz.

When I was fifteen my teacher was Alma Schmidt-Kennedy. She was a marvelous teacher. She was a student of Leschetizky, who was one of the greatest pedagogues in piano playing in Europe. She taught me how to use a piano properly. The whole trouble was, she didn't teach me to read. She taught me how to play, beautifully. I learned the same thing with the clarinet. I had the first clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony to give me lessons. I had the most marvelous tone, as good as anybody's tone. (Of course, I never used that in the Guckenheimer years later.) I had this wonderful tone and I never learned to read. It wasn't until I started to read the stuff for the band—it was simple junk, but I really learned to read. I think something should be said here about when kids are starting to learn an instrument, they should apply themselves to the point where they can read, just the same as the kid who is going to go into art--he learns to draw properly, and then cuts loose to express himself or his troubles or whatever he wants to do.

Riess: Because you found that it was a problem?

Gump: Not for me. Not in the art field, not in the visual end, because I learned to draw.

Riess: Yes, but in music.

Gump: Well, I never learned to read, no.

Riess: It hampered you.

Gump: It did. It was very stupid, because when I studied theory and advanced composition later [1922-27] with [Domenico] Brescia he said, "Well, you should learn a little piano. It's important because you're composing, just so you can work things out at the piano if you want."* So half the time I write without the piano.

The times I write with the piano--I mean, I never know what I'm going to do. Like I have two things I'm supposed to write now. The physiotherapist's boyfriend has got a marvelous organ. He said, "How much would you charge to write something for the organ?" I said, "Well, I don't charge anything. I never heard of that." So I said, "The only thing is I want to see the organ, because it has all kinds of stops." She said, "I know; it has thirty-odd stops." I said, "Well, I want to see the stops so I can cue in these stops."

Riess: That would be fun to work with that.

Gump: Yes. Well, that's one. And the other thing is, Peggy Salkind said, "I wish you'd write something for me." I said, "Do you really want me to?" She said, "Oh yes, I'd like you to write something for me." And so I'm working on a piece--I checked, and there's nothing written for cello and harp. Isn't that a natural thing?

Riess: Oh, that would be lovely.

Gump: There isn't anything. Ann Adams, who is a harpist, is working with me. I'm learning a lot from her. And she says she checked around. It seems natural, doesn't it? Can't you mentally hear it?

I'll tell you where you can hear it, if you want to know. In The Swan by Saint-Saens. [hums] In the back there are the pizzicato strings. Also the cello is playing the solo, and there also are a few harp chords in there. So you can hear the harp and cello there, and that's the only thing that I know of. Isn't that amazing? There's plenty of harp and violin.

Riess: You were recalling how your mother used to have people come down to "The Wilderness" in Saratoga.

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*My mother knew Artur Bodansky who conducted Wagner at the Metropolitan Opera. She knew him in 1926 in Venice and when I was there in 1927 Mother said, "I would like him to look at your music." I showed him some work I had done. He said I was "gifted." He was one of the most critical conductors in the world, so that's as high as you can go. Also, back in the twenties Barbara Lansburgh (later Chevalier) was taking Italian from Domenico Brescia's wife who told her that her husband said that I was one of the best pupils he ever had, and one of the youngest.

Gump: Oh, yes, well, I'm thinking of another person, Sally what's-her-name, I've forgotten now. They said, "Well, sing the Volga Boatman for us, will you?" I thought I was a baritone. What it was, I would make some Russian noises. And they said, "Gee, you've got a wonderful voice." But I never studied voice. The only thing, I did become a heldentenor with the Guckenheimer. I would sing up to an A, and then I couldn't talk the next day. It was like screaming at a baseball game, or football, or something. My voice was wrecked after one chorus. [laughs]

Riess: So it was a nice life in Saratoga.

Gump: Yes, and also on Green Street, too. I mean, interesting people used to come there. For instance, the people connected with the theater. A lot of the people were very interesting.

Riess: You and Robert and Marcella would be included and have a chance to meet all those people?

Gump: Well, yes, we would be around there, sure. We would meet the people.

Another musical person who was the family doctor was Dr. Larry Hoffman, a very famous internist. He was also related to the family, I think through Gustave Gump, you know, the G of S & G, and he also worked his way through medical school playing the flute, so he was quite a good amateur. And he thought I should study the violin, etc., etc. He was a very nice guy, a very charming person. And Dr. Harris, who played the piano awfully well.

Riess: You were in fact surrounded by a lot of encouragement, even though your father was a handful.

Gump: Well, yes, he didn't object to my thinking I was a basso. He never said, "Get out of here, don't bore us." He never did anything like that, I must say. He never put the finger on us.

Remembered Performances

Riess: Did you go to the Opera and the Symphony with your family?

Gump: Well yes, we did. I'm glad you asked. "I'm glad you brought that up," that's a good question. [laughter]

Riess: Well, thank you very much!

Gump: That's a good title for a book!

Gump: Anyway, yes, my mother did. I remember when I got out of the hospital after shooting myself she got these two seats in the back of the Curran Theater where the Symphony played every week. The heavier symphony was one week, and the second week would be a popular sort of thing. They also played in the Civic Auditorium. I remember we went there and geez, I ate up the stuff. I remember the first time I heard Tchaikovsky's Fourth. I hadn't heard it. You see, in those days we didn't have records of those things. I heard it on a Friday afternoon, at the Friday afternoon concert series in those days, and I was so nuts about Tchaikovsky's Fourth and the program notes that Tchaikovsky wrote himself that I went again on Sunday to hear it again. That gives you an idea of how enthusiastic I was about those things. So I found a lot of emotion that I may have lost in my athletic world in ending up trying to create music.

I'll never forget when I was in the hospital Dr. Heyman, who was the surgeon on my leg, he said, "Well, do you know what the sonata form is?" I said, "No, I don't know what the sonata form is." He said, "Oh, I'd better get somebody to tell you about it." I didn't know what a sonata form was. I know what it is now, but the way they write today, sometimes I don't think they know that a sonata ever existed. I've discussed that with a kid transcribing something that I ad-libbed on the piano. He's putting it down in music so I can transcribe it for the harp and cello. He has the same viewpoint I have, that some of the stuff is so modern you can't follow it. It's schizophrenic music. The reason I call it that is because they're only speaking their own language. And I doubt if anybody else can understand that language.

Riess: That's right. We don't have time to bother to understand it, or wish to.

And did you go to the opera?

Gump: Oh yes, sure. When the Chicago Opera used to come out here with Chaliapin--I told you, Chaliapin was unbelievable, great. He was an actor but they talked him into singing. Did you know that?

Riess: No.

Gump: Oh, yes, Chaliapin was an actor. He was a monster of a man when he was probably fourteen or fifteen and they said, "You've got a great voice. Did you ever think of singing?" So he became this magnificent basso. That's why he acted so well.

I used to go to his concerts. He used to sing these songs and act out all of the songs. There's one song I remember he used to sing. Maybe I can find an old record of it. I's amusing. In the song the guy keeps getting drunker all the time and finally this girl turns him down and he says, "Oh, what's the difference? She just was a general's daughter." [chuckles] The joke about this,

Gump: the ironic thing is that there were so many generals in Russia, it didn't mean much. A general here would be different, see. And they had to make a program note on that. But the way he acted, this guy getting drunker all the time, was wonderful. And you know that famous one, "The Flea"? [imitating Chaliapin]. That's the way he gave his concerts, with all this acting.

I remember seeing him in Boris; I think he did it here, yes. Oh, it was wonderful. Then I was in Berlin and he was doing it there, in 1930. And they had a Russian chorus come over to sing the choral part. I think the principals were all Russians and the orchestra was the Berlin Philharmonic. And at the end of each act there was no applause, no applause. I thought, well, these are Russians, maybe the Germans don't like the Russians. But there was no applause at all at the end of any act. Finally at the end of the fourth act, when it was over, the house exploded. The Germans are so disciplined that they wouldn't spoil the illusion until the end, and I never heard such applause in my life for any concert. I'll never forget that. Of course, he was so great, and the whole production was great. And the stage in Berlin--I haven't been to Berlin since then.

Stanford

Riess: You were recuperating from the accident for two years. It sounds like it was much more traumatic than I can imagine.

Gump: What happened was I went to Stanford for two quarters. I went a third quarter but I pulled out of there, but the family never knew it, because I got a big blister on my paralyzed foot and didn't know it. I was afraid it was getting infected so I just told the dean of men, I said, "I think I'd better resign, now." So I never went back, and I went to work in the store.

The reason I went to work—this is important--is I thought, "I can learn much more about arts and all those things through the store and through living in Europe in connection with the store than I ever would at Stanford." I took the two art courses they had at Stanford; they only had two. One of them was Perspective, the one quarter. The second quarter it was Shades and Shadows. That's it, period. That's all the art they had at Stanford.

Riess: Why did you choose Stanford? Why didn't you go to a place that had more art?

Gump: I thought I would learn something there at Stanford. At least culture. But then I met these guys blowing saxophone. I'm sitting down writing counterpoint on the table. I remember Jack Meekin was

Gump: there, a good musician. He was in my class at Stanford. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm working on counterpoint. Do you study?" He said, "No, I don't. It's all up here." I said, "Well, that's okay, as long as you've got it." Jack Meekin, you know, became quite a musician. He was the one who had the orchestra in back of Groucho Marx. Do you remember?

Riess: No.

Gump: Groucho Marx would say, "Jack will play the numbers," and he would ask for a number. Jack Meekin had his orchestra.

Riess: When you were recovering from the accident and you were concentrating on the art and the music you learned saxophone?

Gump: No, no, I didn't play the saxophone. I bought every type of instrument possible to learn how they worked. I even had a bassoon and an E-flat clarinet, a French horn, a melophone. I learned how all those things worked so I can write fairly well for the instuments.

Riess: When you were selecting a college to go to, you could have gone maybe to an art school.

Gump: I could have gone to Cal because they had an architectural school there.

Riess: Why didn't you?

Gump: I don't know, I just thought Stanford was better. Also Stanford was close to Saratoga and all that.

Riess: Yes.

Gump: It was just a youthful thing. Why I went there, I couldn't tell you. My brother went there, and then he left and went to Harvard.

Riess: So do you have some hindsights about all of that? Do you kind of regret that you hadn't finished at Stanford?

Gump: Oh, no. I never regretted it. I'll tell you why: I've met so many people who have got degrees and all that, and most of them should have the third degree as far as I'm concerned. [laughs] I'll never forget--this is a funny story. Ernie Molloy, who became the head of Macy's here, came to a meeting of the retailers. A group of us had to fight unions, a group of retailers. And he sat next to me, and he said, "Who's that there?" I said, "Well, I think that's Cyril Magnin." "Oh, I see," he said. "Well, who is that with him?" I said, "I don't know, Cro, as far as I know." He didn't get the gag, see.

Riess: I don't either, I don't think!

Gump: Cro-Magnin.

Riess: Oh, Cro-Magnon!

Gump: But he didn't even catch it, you see. Now here's a graduate of Harvard, of the Harvard Business School! But what good is this culture when it doesn't mean anything to them? They get bored to death with business. Fortunately, I never was bored anyplace, even in jail. [laughs]

Family Finances

Riess: There are various crises described in the Treasure Trade book; Gump's family was weathering all sorts of hard times.

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Gump: Well, they saved enough that they had a lot of securities. And so when the crash came there still was cash. We still had quite a lot of securities.

Riess: Was it the financial problems that were very hard on your mother? Was that one of the reasons your mother left?

Gump: Well, she said he wasn't the same person she married. Of course, who is as far as that goes? But no, she said he became selfish. She said, "I'll never forget, when we got married he asked me things, 'Are you sure you want this or that?' He was so generous." Then he suddenly changed. He got acrimonious, I guess is the word.

Riess: Parsimonious.

Gump: Yes. A little bit over-thrifty, let's put it that way.

Panama-Pacific Exposition, and French Lessons

Riess: What do you recall of the 1915 Exposition?

Gump: Oh, that was very important. I went as often as possible to the Exposition. I was fascinated by it.

Riess: What kinds of things did you keep going back to?

Gump: I remember one thing that doesn't interest me so much now, the Mechanics Building. It was a very big building and in it there was

Gump: a lot of stuff like miniature destroyers and battleships and also trains, and all that sort of stuff. Being that age, you get fascinated with these miniature things. Well, some guys never outgrow that. They have model trains in their basements.

Getting back to the Fair, I remember one time I was walking home to a French lesson. I had a teacher waiting for me. I was walking up Scott Street, and that Scott Street entrance moves right into the Tower of Jewels at the Fair. I remember walking up that steep hill there between Union and Filbert. I was looking across the street at a Packard that we were supposed to get delivery on--it was delayed and delayed and delayed, not like now, where they make a million at a crack—and bang, I walked right into a concrete post.

You asked me what I was interested in. I knocked myself out with that interest in mechanics! I remember getting to the house and going up the sixty-four steps to the front door. My French teacher was waiting for me and she said, "You don't look very well. What is it?" I said, "Well, my head's funny." She said, "I'll tell your mother. You'd better lie down." So my interest in the Packard automobile knocked out my interest in French at the moment.

It wasn't until years later, in 1924, that what I didn't learn in French I wish I had. I was only eighteen years old but I was in Paris, a young person fooling around in night clubs, and my French wasn't very good. I remember my brother picked out some charming ladies of the evening—probably night also--and maybe that's another good book title, maybe "Knights of the Night." Anyway, I remember this woman turns to my brother and says, "Your brother cannot speak French. I wish he would speak English." That's when I wish I had paid more attention to my French lessons. You never know when something's going to come in handy.

Milton Lichtenstein

Riess: Who was your Uncle Milton? In Carol Wilson's book she says you designed houses "acceptable to your Uncle Milton."

Gump: He was my mother's brother.

Riess: Milton Lichtenstein?

Gump: Well, he changed his name to Latham during the First World War because anybody with a German-sounding name didn't get by very well. He was quite a good golfer. I think I said that he didn't attend to his drafting and drawing, and he got jobs through my father and my uncle, stuff like that. Various people--he was always late showing up and he would say, "Oh, let's go out and play golf." He was a

Gump: very good golfer. He beat everybody. He was the champion of California. But he never won the thing. One of those guys, anybody would say, "Oh hell, Miltie Latham, he can beat anybody." But he was too good a sport.

See, what he did—it's funny--he would go on and probably maybe win two or three of his matches. You know, it's the old system of where you've got to beat everybody who comes along until you're finally in the finals, but he would get as far as maybe the semi-finals and then he would hear of some friend of his who was doing so well that they'd celebrate that night. And he'd have a terrible hangover and he would lose the match the next day. That was his pattern.

Riess: He needed a manager.

Gump: In those days they didn't have managers of amateurs.

Riess: How was his architecture?

Gump: Well, he was quite good at planning. He had certain earmarks. I could spot one of his jobs because he used octagonal fenestration once in a while. I think he liked the 45-degree triangle.

Riess: But would you say that he was an inspiration for your interest in architecture?

Gump: Well, yes. The Gump's Corporation bought the corner of Jones and Geary. They'd already owned the York Hotel, which was the name of it then. And the other corner was open so they bought that, and they put up an apartment house they called the Hereford Court. And I remember he and I were trying to work out the plans of those floors. I said, gee, it would be good if we could get one more apartment in there. And we muscled around with it and it didn't work out. But that sort of thing, that practical experience is worth an awful lot. That was around 1925 or '26.

He wasn't very much in love with money the way my father's side of the family was. But on the other hand, he was always glad to pull the sob stuff about how hard up he was, to get money from the people he didn't like because they had too much money. You know that combination? I'm sure you've bumped into it before.

Penthouse on Powell Street, Playing the Organ

Riess: What was the pre-fab penthouse your father got for your apartment on Powell Street?

Gump: A pre-fabricated house that we put on the roof.

Riess: I've never heard of doing such a thing.

Gump: No, it wasn't done very often. We got permission from the fire chief because that could be a fire hazard, and we put that up there so I could go up there and play the organ. I had an organ that was pumped. You see, in those days they didn't have electric ones. And because I couldn't use the footpedal the chauffeur would pump the thing underneath with his hands. The advantage of having an organ is that it can sustain notes, like these electronic things that can hold the notes. I have a little Casio over there that builds in the rhythm. On the piano the notes don't hold.

Riess: Was the penthouse all glassed around?

Gump: No, just a few windows. There were steps right up to the roof. I was on crutches then, but the chauffeur helped me get up there and I would sit and play, work out some long-winded harmony or something.

I'll give you an example. Maybe I can describe this well enough that you could write it. Say you wrote something, and the melody goes [hums six notes], C-D-E, E-F-G, see. Now, if I was to do that on the piano I'd have to play that chord again, that C chord. But on the electronic keyboard I can just hold the C chord, or whatever I want. If you wanted to make it more interesting you could make it an E-minor chord and have the major seventh. I won't go into that detail, but you see, holding the C chord right through there is what you get in an orchestra. I guess that's why a piano isn't too good for that. The new synthesizer I have is remarkable for all kinds of sounds, from Martian effects to piccolo solos. You name it, it has it, and more.

Plus I can hear that. I use that electronic keyboard more to test when I've written something. I think I told you that somebody said, "How can you write if you don't play?" I said, "Well, I'll give you a couple of answers. Did you ever hear of a guy who can play four horns at once?" "No." "But people write for four horns, don't they?" "Oh, that's right." Let's say I have a passage I can hear. It goes [hums a quick rhythm]. That's pretty fast. I couldn't play that. I can hear it. So what do I do? I break it down in half. It goes [hums at half the original speed]. And I write down how it goes. Then if it turns out to be sixteenth notes, or even thirty-second notes, I don't have to play it. I can hear it. So that's how it works. Maybe with the four horns underneath it, who knows? But that explains why I don't play very well.

But the composer who revolutionized the orchestra was Beethoven. The amazing thing about him that people don't realize is that Beethoven was a fabulous pianist. You always think of Chopin as a great pianist. Of course, he did revolutionize piano playing.

Gump: But Beethoven was a remarkable pianist. It's amazing what he did with the orchestra, using the instruments he had—and they couldn't play too many notes in those days.

[Added later] Now an example of a great piano composer who did not know orchestra well was Liszt; he had Raff do his orchestration. But Beethoven's piano concerts were one-half his published compositions and the second one-half devoted to improvisations. This was all before he started to lose his hearing, say between 1788 and 1808, but in the same time he was revolutionizing the orchestra. Why did he put three horns in the Eroica (Third) Symphony? Because when he had an idea for a fake recapitulation he wanted a quick change to the key of F; if it were slow he could change "crooks" and then back to E-flat, the key of the symphony. The master decided to put in a third horn in F. So in the scherzo and second, third, and fourth movements he used all three in E-flat. Today that's nothing, but in his day it was considered very advanced.

This was all done by a great pianist. That's why Brahms always felt Ludwig's spirit was looking over his shoulder. I think this helped because I don't know of a single work by Brahms that is not a gem in anything he wrote, from songs to symphonies and overtures. Talking of overtures, he was asked to write one for the opening of Breslau University, the "Academic Festival" Overture. He surprised the stuffed shirts with the use of common student-songs. He ends with "Gaudeamus Igatur." (To branch into my very limited Latin, Gaudeamus igatur Iran delenda es!)*

Excuse another sidetrack, but Brahms also was a great pianist. He had some condition, some disease that affected the extension of his fingers [Raynaud's disease?]. He orchestrated beautifully and often used the instruments in an original way without piano influence. This is not my defense because I have lost my piano technique, it only has to do with the Beethoven query. [End of addition]

Speaking of the limitations in instruments in Beethoven's day, I was talking to Lori Westin, who occupies the Richard Gump Chair in the Symphony. There is a passage in the Ninth Symphony and I asked her, "How in the world could that be played? He knew better than that." She said, "I think that was just at the time when they had one valve on the horn and were able to get that one note." If not, they've got to play the note by stopping with the hand, and you can imagine [demonstrates horn sound and hand position]. Imagine how some of those things sounded! If you listen to Brahms' themes on the horn, they're all open notes, natural horn. Beethoven, of course, is natural horn.

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*"Let us all celebrate, Iran is destroyed."

Riess: When you were recuperating, did you have a lot of different tutors?

Gump: It was very disturbing. I was having a tutor to catch up because I was in the hospital for quite a while. And the funny thing is that the nurse I had was a very devout Catholic, and my tutor was a Christian Scientist. So, geez, I would get the Christian Science view about something, and then I would get the Catholic view about something. I became very broad-minded! They both sounded very logical. So I'm not for or against any religion, unless it fits the occasion.

To Europe with Robert, 1924

Riess: When you were "partially restored to health," it says in the book, you went to Europe, in the summer of 1924. "Partially restored" meant that you could walk?

Gump: Oh, yes. No, I'll tell you what happened on that.

Riess: Well, tell about the whole trip, and how that was planned.

Gump: My brother and I decided we didn't want to go all over Europe so we decided we would concentrate on London and Paris, period. Paris particularly because the Olympic Games were there in 1924, and England because we took two cathedral trips, one to the northeast and then one to the west.

Riess: Did your parents tell you where you should go?

Gump: Well, I'll tell you. On the English trip it was very interesting. My mother's stepmother had a brother-in-law who married her sister who was English. He was Scottish. He was wonderful, he would take us around London and say [imitating Scottish brogue], "You see this little place here?" "Yes." He said, "You see this iron post here?" "Yes, I see it." "Well, that's where such-and-such a famous highwayman who escaped from the police went through this alley." Very adventurous things like that, interesting, weren't in any guidebooks. And he said, "Be sure and go to Ely's cathedral." And he said, "You've got to go to Lincoln," which incidentally has become my favorite of all the churches, of all the shrines. It is my favorite in England, still. That and Chartres are the two greatest, to me. I don't know Cologne very well, but I know that Cologne was finally finished in the nineteenth century, so it's not so pure.

Well, I was nuts about that stuff. I read quite a few books as I was interested in those days, and I really enjoyed it. I don't know how I climbed up those steps when I had just gotten out of shooting myself two years earlier.

Riess: Your orientation was to great buildings when you went there. That was what you were drawn to?

Gump: Yes, I drew Gothic windows and stuff like that.

Riess: What was Robert interested in?

Gump: Oh, for instance, we went to where the great Bard was buried, you know: "damned be he who moves his bones," a guy named Willie Shakespeare. He [Robert] went there with great reverence. At that time he was studying playwriting in the great [George Pierce] Baker's 47 workshop in Harvard. [Eugene] O'Neill had worked there, studied there, and he was fairly successful!

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Gump: We went outside after the services were over, and there were kids playing leapfrog over the gravestones right in front of the church where Shakespeare is buried, in Stratford. His father was a sort of town glover; he made gloves. It just made me think.

History, Richard Gump's Way

Gump: You asked me about interests, and I'll tell you something interesting about my interests. I went to see the famous place that Madame Butterfly's story was written about, Nagasaki. I go up there, and I learn that the true story about that is not that at all; it's just the reverse. This Japanese woman had this French officer under her thumb. She demanded, "Give me more money," each time his boat would put in there, or she would write home to his family in Paris. So she kept shaking down the officer, just the reverse of Puccini's opera. I've forgotten who wrote the story. I think Boito might have written the libretto. We'd better look that up. [Text by Giacosa and Illica, after David Belasco's drama of 1900 on the story by John Luther Long]

But getting back to this--what made me think of it--there was a man by the name of Glover (Shakespeare's father made me think of that), and he was a remarkable guy. He was something like twenty-eight years old, and he went over and convinced the Meiji, the Imperial Family, not the samurais, to put in some railroads. This young man of twenty-eight! And he lived out there in that place where Madame Chrysanthemum, which is what her name actually was, lived. I was so fascinated by this story, and nobody's ever touched it, about this young guy, a Scotsman, who was very interested in putting in railways at the time. And it was through his influence

Gump: that the Meiji came back to reign. They got rid of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the family that was the last ruling samurai. At twenty-eight he practically put the crowned head back on the throne.

Riess: You have quite a way of absorbing history!

Gump: Well, that's what I'm trying to say. You ask me my interests, that's how I have these interests. I go into a place like that and I picture the period and what was happening, and I find it fascinating. Anybody has an interest in things that fascinate them. And that's why I have such a broad view; not a broad knowledge, my knowledge is half-baked, but a broad view. I think that's the reason, I just picture the period.

For instance, just recently I decided I wanted to be able to date costumes so I have a few costume books around. Well, people say, "Who is that guy? Is he going to dress in drag or something? I didn't know he was 'that way'." But no, the reason I get the costume books is to be able to identify paintings, and particularly portraits. I can do it within ten or twenty years, easily.

And another way of dating—see that big music book over there? I know that that can't be earlier than around 1500, 1480 because it's got five lines, and they had four lines. But there are two different books, it's got a separation of 150 years, so I don't know which is right and which is wrong.

I was looking at costumes the other day and I found that men's shoes—I don't know about women, they didn't show their tootsies very much in those days--men's shoes, just about that period that music developed five lines, they eliminated the pointed shoes for men. And they became sort of stubbed. Think of a portrait of Henry VIII--well, that was the early 16th century. But I think probably the greatest development in the history of man, proportionate to what came before him, is around 1500--all the discoveries in science and all kinds of things, around 1500. In music, as I say, the way they delineated music, how they decided this is the way to do it--the only people who could have decided is the Church.

And for instance, talking about the Church, I'll give you a story. I have nothing against the Church. "Some of my best friends are Catholics!" says he, a semi-devout Jew. [chuckles] Did I tell you about the Battle of Poitiers that Charles Martel won?

Riess: No.

Gump: He became the great hero and set up the crown of France. That battle was 734. (I may be off two years, but that doesn't matter.) The reason he won is because the Arabs, who were well established in Spain, there was a sort of revolt in North Africa that weakened the Arab army. You know who caused this revolt?

Riess: No.

Gump: These Shiites, who are causing a lot of the trouble in the Near East right now. The Shiites had a sort of uprising in North Africa, and it weakened this army. And you see what would have happened? If they had won that we would have had the culture that the Jews and the Arabs had that only was known by the Church. But just think of how it set it back 700 years, because the Shiites weakened the army so that Charles Martel at the Battle of Poitiers and afterwards at the Battle of Tours drove the Arabs out of that part of Europe. They stayed back in Spain until 1492. And that's another date that's amazing, because when Columbus discovered America was the same date that the last Arabs, with their advanced science, were kicked out of Spain.

Riess: You really do have such a personal grip on history, and a way of putting things together for yourself.

Gump: Well, whatever I say, I hope it's interesting to the reader.

Riess: It's interesting because anyone who looks at life like that gets an enormous amount of pleasure out of everything; all information is grist for the mill.

Gump: Oh, that's true. Well, a few things might bore me, like bridge!

Riess: When you were over there in 1924 did you sketch and keep journals?

Gump: I don't remember. I may have done a few sketches.

Riess: Would you say that a lot of your taste and discriminating view of things was formed on that trip?

Gump: Oh no, not just the one trip. I was fascinated by architecture before that. It was like somebody who had never heard a symphony, and had the opportunity to hear a symphony for the first time in his life. You know what a thrill it would be. It's the same thing as going to a great cathedral. You look at it in pictures but it doesn't have the overpowering effect that the building itself would have, no matter how good the photographs or sketches were.

Parents' Divorce

Riess: When you came back after that summer was when you entered Stanford?

Gump: Yes.

Riess: Was your parents' separation a kind of relief for you?

Gump: Yes, I think it was. But there was a big contrast, because as you know I lived with my father for a while.

Riess: She announced by mail that she was leaving him?

Gump: Yes. I think my brother read the letter that she wrote to my father and he told me that it was pretty--oh, he [my father] was up at Crater Lake and he wanted to jump in the lake. And my brother said, "At least sleep on it." I remember my brother told me that. It was terrible; he was so upset, naturally.

My father didn't realize what he was doing. I mean, in a way his attitude toward people and things--I hate to use the term but maybe I should--he was sort of high-handed. I remember some very prominent local people would come in the store and he'd have gotten something new from the Orient. Let's say it was Mrs. Pope. So he would say, "Oh, Mrs. Pope, come in." Well, soon it got so that Mrs. Pope would see him and hide in back of a booth or something so that he didn't bother her. Probably it was something she would like and probably would buy eventually, but doing that he very often annoyed people.

Although on the other hand I guess his batting average was pretty high because he would get somebody like--I remember Mr. [Eugene] Grace who was head of Bethlehem Steel happened to walk in there. My father just had a hunch that if he talked to this man who was with somebody else--he said, "Are you Mr. Grace?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Oh, how do you do? I'm Gump." And then he started talking to him, and I think he got Grace interested in Oriental art. So it has its value and it has its losses.

Riess: Yes. But the high-handedness?

Gump: I think it was impatience. It's a silly thing to say, but it's very much like Beethoven who was high-handed and impatient and everything with everybody. And it was the same thing with my father because of his affliction.

My mother, who was a marvelous reader--I was brought up listening to her read and I remember listening to the whole Forsyte Saga--she read to my father every evening. I remember that. I would pretend I was working on schoolwork but I was listening to her read. And she was great, she could do all the dialects, without being affected, you know.

So when this [divorce] happened he felt terribly put out. But he hadn't realized how valuable her company was. He kept moaning about her always going to the Little Theater and acting and all that stuff. Well, I can see where I might moan, too. But she would tell me, "Oh, he was so wonderful when we first got married," and all that. And she decided to go her way, and he decided to go his. And suddenly she decided she couldn't take it any longer, and sent him a

Gump: letter. Naturally it shocked him. She had never said, "If you're going to keep behaving that way, we'll have to separate." She never said that to him, that I know of. So naturally it was a shocker.

Riess: So while you were working at the store after Stanford you were living with your father at the Palace Hotel?

Gump: That's right, yes.

Riess: You had too much of your father then.

Gump: Yes, he was pretty tough to me. But it made me pretty tough, too. I think it broke my brother, but it didn't break me. I was a different kind of horse.

II "FOUNDED IN 1861"

Coming Into the Business

Riess: Was your father disappointed about your leaving Stanford?

Gump: He never said anything. I think I said, "If I stay around the store, chances are you'll send me to Europe or someplace to learn buying and buying abroad. In the meantime, I'm learning about the merchandise here." So that's exactly what happened. I got terrific knowledge there. I knew stuff better than a lot of so-called experts from museums because I knew who made the fakes. Most of those guys don't know who makes them.

Riess: Was he trying to give you an education so that you would have been "above" the store?

Gump: Mother did more that way. You see, I didn't know--when I look back on it and think of studying to be an architect--I wasn't going to be an architect and the head of Gump's. That's a peculiar combination. But it worked out that I was just enough of each--enough of a businessman and enough of a designer that I could use both.

Riess: That idea of "being the head of Gump's"--when was that stated in so many words?

Gump: Oh, I'll tell you--this is interesting—I think it was one of the Schlesingers who was head of the Emporium who came to dinner at my father's, he and his wife, as I remember. I've forgotten the fellow's name--Joe or Charlie, whatever it was. And my father said to this fellow, "I want you to meet the future president and vice-president of Gump's." And my brother and I were saying, "Well, who does he mean? Who's got the big job?" It didn't build up a rivalry between my brother and me, but we wondered who would be president and who would be vice-president. Of course, we figured by age my brother would be president.

Gump: My father's older brother never was president. When my grandfather, his father, had a heart attack, my father used some little scheme--he should have been in politics, he was a schemer--I think Alfred, his brother, was away in Europe buying. And Dad had a stockholder's meeting and had himself voted president. Although he and Alfred got along very well. The reason he bought my uncle out was because my uncle wanted to put in a fellow who had married his daughter. He wanted to put him in the store and give him a big position. But it turned out the guy wasn't the most honest guy in the world.

My Uncle Alfred said, "Buy or sell," and my father said, "I'll buy." And that's how we bought him out. And the worst of it was he bought him out at the top, just before the Crash. So he had this terrible debt all his life. On top of that, my brother and my sister and a young girl he befriended spent money like crazy. And he never stopped them. They would kick and scream and then he would have to kick through more dough. Finally when he was gone and I was in charge they could kick and scream all they wanted, they would get nothing, because I knew it wasn't doing them any good, it was just spoiling them.

Riess: But the idea that you and your brother were the future president and vice-president--was this a sort of game-playing?

Gump: No, no, I just remember that particular incident. We never thought of who was going to be president. In fact, when I went into the store--my brother had quit Harvard and the two of us were sitting down trying to figure out a way of working on invoices together, something like that. Our theory didn't work. With an IBM machine which we had later it probably would work very well. I remember our working together on a problem trying to figure out a formula for something, trying to figure out a short-cut to save some dough or time.

Riess: Was this oppressive, the idea that your future was there, cut out for you?

Gump: No, it wasn't. Maybe for my brother--he would be out, wouldn't come home or something, or would have a hangover, something--I don't know. I'm not trying to degrade him. He did enough of that for himself. He tried to be my father, you see, the big salesman. But he didn't have it.

I'll never forget, we had a marvelous Thai head, the best one we had in that big collection. And we had it in the gallery there in a certain niche. A fellow came in, somebody who said, "I'm very interested in that head." And I said, "Wonderful." I decided to talk to him and it turned out it was Sidney Coe Howard, the playwright. He bought this head--I got to know him later, when I

Gump: lived in Hollywood, not well--and I remember telling my father, "Well, I sold that head for $6,000." "Wonderful! I guess you have a future." That was big to him, you see, the salesman stuff.

But I didn't do any selling. For Sidney Coe Howard this was the type of thing where he decided that he couldn't live unless he could get a certain object, work of art. And he said, "That's the way I feel about this head. I have to have it." So there was no selling at all. It was just writing up the tag. He was a very nice fellow. You know, he wrote that wonderful play, "They Knew What They Wanted." It was all about the Napa Valley. Charles Laughton did it; it was wonderful.

Riess: When you began your apprenticeship at the store, was that a structured training?

Gump's Window Display

Gump: I remember my Uncle Alfred who was vice-president at the time, in 1925, he asked me to lay out something in the back of the windows on Post Street, to make a drawing. I remember I sweated away doing an accurate architectural drawing. But it turned out that it wasn't too accurate, so Mr. [Gustave] Liljestrom who had done a lot--in fact, he designed the Jade Room, I think you will probably see that in the book—he got me out of the problem by straightening out a few dimensions that were wrong.

First my uncle had said, "Well, go down in the basement and ask Joe Kennedy for a job." I went down there to see Joe Kennedy, the head of the basement. I said, "Have you got some work here?" And he said, "No, we haven't got any work today, young man." So I just left. When I saw my uncle he said, "Well, did you get it?" I said, "No, he has no place for me." Later on when he found out I'm the son of the boss Joe said he almost died—because I became his boss eventually, years later--but he told me, he said he almost died when he found out I was the son of the boss, because I didn't say so. He was just saying, "Well no, there's no work here." It wasn't whether he liked me or not, you know. It was funny.

So I went back upstairs, and after that's when I did the window. My uncle said, "Well, you like to draw and design. You'd better do the back of these windows."

Riess: Were Gump's windows already important?

Gump: They were for those days--they used to do great big windows with interiors of rooms and all that stuff. Some of them were pretty

Gump: busy. Looked at today they'd seem crazy, but in those days they were wonderful. I changed that whole thing. I'm responsible for the Gump's windows.*

Riess: But even before you came, did they have a certain special--?

Gump: Yes, there was a flair that other people didn't have. All kinds of people made it a point to see our windows. [Added later] I did make a valuable contribution to the commercial display world, that is, the change of display window design. That came about because Bill Brewer who worked with me said he had had a conversation with a guy with "most imaginative ideas." I met this friend, Don Smith, and his views stimulated me, and so I gave Don a chance on the next window to be done.

There were two problems which I as boss had to settle. First, most department heads decided on the ultimate for his window, and second, Don's ideas were so revolutionary the department heads just could not take it. I persisted, and though everyone thought me nuts, they just had to stop moaning. In my lectures I called the old display system the "super-market apple pyramid school." Don's theory was all show windows were designed from the ground up and his idea was the windows are three-dimensional spaces and the merchandise to be sold should become part of the design. Let's say we wish to show a dinnerware pattern. We would show the five-piece set up on the floor, but the various serving pieces, soup tureens, platters and anything else might be dangling all over that space, hidden by invisible wires, to attract attention. Many was the department head crying his eyes out on looking at his precious wares. But the expression soon changed when they found this "whacky" display did better than the old two-dimensional, ground up methods of the past. I also made a strict rule that once the 3-D design was done, no touchee! [End of addition]

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*Gump's Display Directors prior to 1944 were "Mac" McDougall, Oriental windows, and Jerry Sax, European windows. Under Richard Gump it became one job. The first display director was Don Smith, 1944 to 1946. Herb Raynaud was Display and Publicity Manager, May 1946 to August 1953; Leo Kenny, August 1953 to Spring 1958; Al Proom Spring 1958 to June 1961. James Stearns was Display Director June 1961 to May 1963 and he returned as Assistant Display Director in May 1980. Robert J. Mahoney, Display Director, June 1963 to the present, 1988.

From By Motor to the Golden Gate, by Emily Post,
D. Appleton & Co., 1916

In San Francisco we rushed early each morning to the Exposition and spent no time anywhere else. Every now and then someone said to Pauline, with whom we were stopping, the mysterious sentence: "Have you taken them to Gump's?" And her answer: "Why no, I haven't!" was always uttered in that abashed apologetic tone that acknowledges a culpable forgetfulness. Finally one day instead of driving out towards the Exposition grounds we turned towards the heart of the city.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"To Gump's!" triumphantly.

"To Gump's? Of all the queer sounding things, what is to Gump's?"

"Our most celebrated shop. You really must not leave San Francisco without seeing their Japanese and Chinese things."

Shades of dullness, thought I, as if there were not shops enough in New York! As for Oriental treasures, I was sure there were more on Fifth Avenue at home than there are left in Asia. But Pauline being determined, there was nothing for us to do but, as E.M. said, "to Gump it!"

Feeling very much bored at being kept away from the Exposition, I entered a store reminiscent of a dozen in New York, walked down an aisle lined on either side with commonplace chinaware. My first sensation of boredom was changing to irritability. Then we entered an elevator and in the next instant I took back everything I had been thinking. It was as though we had been transported, not only across the Pacific, but across centuries of time. Through the apartments of an ancient Chinese palace, we walked into a Japanese temple, and again into a room in a modern Japanese house. You do not need more than a first glance to appreciate why they lead visitors to a shop with the unpromising name of Gump. I am not sure that the name does not heighten the effect. If it were called the Chinese Palace, or the Temple of Japan, or something like that, it would be like telling the answer before asking the conundrum. As in calling at a palace, too, strangers, distinguished ones only, are asked to write their names in the visitor's book.

In this museum-shop each room has been assembled as a setting for the things that are shown in it. Old Chinese porcelains, blue and white, sang de bœuf, white, apple-green, cucumber-green and peacock-blue, are shown in a room of the Ming Period in ebony and gold lacquer.

The windows of all the rooms, whether in the walls or ceiling, are of translucent porcelain in the Chinese, or paper in the Japanese; which produces an indescribable illusion of having left the streets of San Francisco thousands of miles, instead of merely a few feet, behind you.

The room devoted to jades and primitives has night-blue walls overlaid with gold lacquer lattices and brass carvings and in it the most wonderful treasures of all. They are kept hidden away in silk-lined boxes, and are brought out and shown to you, Chinese fashion, one at a time, so that none shall detract from the other. We wanted to steal a small white marble statuette of a boy on a horse. A thing of beauty and spirit very Greek, yet pure Chinese that dated back to the oldest Tang Dynasty! There was also a silver, that was originally green, luster bronze of the Ham Period, two thousand years old, and a sacrificial bronze pot belonging to the Chow Dynasty, B.C. 1125. The patina, or green rust of age, on these two pieces was especially beautiful. I also much admired a carved rhinoceros horn, but found it was merely Chien Lung, one hundred and fifty years old, which in *that* room was much too modern to be important.

In one of the Japanese rooms there were decorated paper walls held up by light bamboo frames, amber paper *shoji* instead of windows, and the floors covered with *tatami*, the Japanese floor mats, two inches thick. You sit on the floor as in Japan and drink tea, while silks of every variety are brought to you.

We saw three rugs of the Ming Dynasty that are probably the oldest rugs extant. The most lovely one was of yellow ground, with Ho birds in blue. And there was an *ice-cooler* of cloisonné, Ming Period. They brought the ice from the mountains and cooled the imperial palace—years ago. Yet to hear Europeans talk, you'd almost be led to believe that ice is an American invention.

We were shown old Chinese velvet wedding-skirts and a tapestry of blues, with silver storks and clouds of an embroidery so fine that its stitches could be seen only through a magnifying glass, and poison plates belonging to the Emperor Ming that were supposed to change color if any food injurious to His Majesty were served on them.

One of the most beautiful things was a Coromandel screen of the Kang Hai Period, in a corridor that it shared only with an enormous lacquer image of the Buddha.

We were told that a rather famous collector went out to see the Fair. On his first day in San Francisco—he was stopping at the St. Francis Hotel which is only a stone's throw across the square—he went idly into this most alluring of shops and became so interested he stayed all day. The next day he did the same, and the third morning found him there again. Finally he said with a sigh: "Having come to see the Exposition, I *must* go out there this afternoon and look at it, as I have to go back to New York tomorrow."

I don't know that this is an average point of view, but it is a fact that was vouched for, and also that his check to the detaining shop ran into very high figures.

Oriental and European Division

Gump: You see, the store was terribly divided. (It ended up divided, which was bad. Now it's better.) But there was this sort of a division between the Orient and the Occident. (I said, "Well, as far as I'm concerned, I like the Orient. But I don't know if it's occidental or on purpose." [chuckles] A wonderful play on words.) But my uncle was Europe, and my father was the Orient. They had these divisions. My brother was interested in the Oriental section.

When I finally got in there I said, "Gifts are gifts. Why do we have to have Oriental Gifts and European Gifts, whatever you want to call them, American Gifts, Occidental Gifts?" But then also from the point of view of our reputation because of the Jade Room and all that glamour we had—. Did you ever see that book, By Motor to the Golden West, by Emily Post?*

Riess: No.

Gump: I'll show it to you. It was very important as far as our history goes.

But getting back to this division--sometimes it made sense. You see, people would go into the Jade Room and say, "Oh, this is Oriental. I don't know much about Oriental." And then by the time my father would get hold of them they'd started an Oriental collection.

Reproductions**

Gump: But a lot of times it didn't make sense. Because, for instance, I could get things made in Japan that might be European in design.

I'll give you an idea I had—in fact I told Judy Wilbur who is president of the Asian Art Museum about it. I can get Sung pottery done very cheaply down in southern Italy because the base they use is exactly the same as the Sung, and they're overpainting with permanganate to get that deep brown-black that they have in the Sung pottery. And they can do it very easily.

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*See Appendices.

**See further discussion p. 105.

Gump: I had often thought of doing that. I said, "I can get them done cheap." She said, "Well, that would be wonderful. We can put a few of those in the shop there [in the Asian Art Museum] and say it's from our collection, copies." The idea of having them done in Italy sounds impossible. And it's just the reverse.

The Nymphenburg porcelain, are you acquainted with it? They had figures that were very delicate. When Martin Rosenblatt and I went to Hong Kong, the first time we went to the Orient, in 1953, I was looking at some figures and he said, "Oh, those are made in China. We can't get those." And then a fellow in the office of Deacon and Company--he became head of the office--he said [imitating English accent], "This is a sort of porcelain that is being made in the New Territories, not in the town itself. But if you'd like to see it, I can send one of my men with you." So I went out to look at this stuff. It was the stuff that said, "Made in China." It was made in China, it was made right in the New Territories and it was perfectly legal to bring it in. The thing I'm getting at is that you could take that "Made in Hong Kong" and make a perfect copy.

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Gump: Getting back to the creative stuff--I remember when I was there in 1930 this French prudential, as somebody called it--they wanted something in French prudential. [laughter]

Riess: Somebody actually said that?

Gump: Oh yes, sure. And also they asked for Chickendale. Oh, there are a lot of those things.

But in those days I could buy cerisier or fruitwood—cerisier being the cherry tree—I could buy simple tables and things of that kind and I found a guy in Paris who could carve them. So they were pretty authentic; they were old, but the carving was new. I would sketch with chalk exactly what design I would want. The original chairs were so simple they wouldn't sell. They'd probably sell today, but that was 1930, so I just made them a little better--more marketable.

But there was a creative thing I did. I got antiques and made them more valuable. And it wan't cheating anybody. They would ask, "Is that old?" "Yes, it's old." but if they would say, "Is that carving old?" "No, it's not old." But nobody would ever think to ask is the carving old.

I'll show you the Spanish chairs. I have six of them--you know, those arm chairs?

Riess: Yes.

Gump: In Italy they get those and they carve the stretcher across the bottom. I wouldn't do that. I would leave that exactly as it was. I could have it done very easily by very good carvers in Florence and bring the value up three times, just carving the stretcher in the bottom. But I would rather have them pure and pristine the way they were.

Creativity and Change

Riess: Did you go through all the various store departments in an apprenticeship?

Gump: Yes, if somebody there knew the styles. Mr. [Henry Judson] Allen, who did all the European design of the Interior Design Department, was marvelous. He would sit down and do his sketches and I used to watch. He did a drawing, I remember one time, of an ideal house—as he thought. And I remember I made a scale drawing of a house, too. (I may be able to find one of the drawings I did, around 1926.) And he looked at mine and said, "Oh, this is wonderful." Of course, he was sort of a mentor. He was a designer and a very charming guy, a wonderful person. He had wonderful morale in his department. He was very creative.

A lot of creative people are fussy and introverted. But that's not necessary. In fact they say, "He's that way, he's artistic." That's a lot of bunk. The most artistic people I know are happy, good-natured and not necessarily introverted. I've seen businessmen terrible that way. They can't even express themselves. They sit in a big office with a big desk to defend themselves.

Riess: Yes. That's a good point.

Gump: I'll never forget the story about when I went into Macmillan the first time, in the big office of Ray Hagel, who was chairman of the board of Macmillan. I went in there because Eleanor Friede, the widow of Donald Friede--he got me to do the book on Good Taste Costs No More--she said, "I wish you would go and see Ray Hagel. I understand you might be selling the store." I said, "I didn't say I was going to sell the store. I didn't want to say that." "Well, you should meet Ray."

So anyway, I walk in this office--she was there waiting for me--and I said, "Oh, I don't know if you know the magazine, New York--not New Yorker, but New York." And the three of them had a big laugh. I said, "What's so funny?" They said, "Well, he's the publisher. He built the magazine." It was Armand G. Erpf. He made it, and here I'm talking about what a good magazine it is. [Armand Erpf was chairman of New York Magazine and a member of the executive

Gump: committee of Crowell, Collier and Macmillan, Inc. which bought Gump's April 30, 1969. They changed their name January 1, 1973 to Macmillan, Inc.]

Well, anyway, we're sitting in these four chairs, the way we are here, as equals. These things are part of protocol. It's almost like the middle ages, where you were on the dias or "below the salt." When the board came, then I became one of his hirelings, you see. He goes in back of his desk at the other end of the room and I'm at this end. He's got his wall up. I can tell Ray that because he's a very intelligent guy. He would get an awful laugh out of it if I were to tell him. In fact, I think I told his vice-president, McIlhenny, that.

Talking of McIlhenny, let me tell you this story. I asked, "Why don't you use our logo anymore?" They changed the logo, you see, of Gump's, took off the date, "founded in 1861." He said, "Well, that's not done anymore." So I looked at the tabasco bottle--because his family, the McIlhennys, invented tabasco sauce--and I remember in a phone conversation I said, "What the hell are you talking about? You've got it right on your family heirloom tabasco sauce, 'founded in 1868.' How can you say 'They're not doing that anymore?' It's the same in your family, so don't tell me they're not saying when the thing was founded. It's very valuable." Fortunately Bob Leitstein, the president now, he used it right away, he jumped at it. And also he went back to our old logo.

Riess: What is the old logo?

Gump: Well, I can show it to you. I've got one around here. The guy who took over wanted to make a change and so he used serifs. Actually you couldn't recognize our ads in the paper because he took out the old logo.

Riess: Oh, so you're talking about the typeface that was used.

Gump: Yes, on Gump's. I'll show you an early one. When you see the logo you'll recognize it.

Riess: How far back does that particular typeface date?

Gump: Oh, I don't know. It evolved.

Salesmen and Buyers

Riess: Most of your apprenticeship then was in the design end, rather than in the selling end?

Gump: No, I wasn't selling. I was buying merchandise and seeing how it sold. Promotion is mass selling.

Riess: You told how Sidney Coe Howard made his purchase, but were you ever sent out to the floor to sell?

Gump: Oh yes, my father said, "Get down on the floor and sell." I said, "Okay, I'll lie down on the floor. But I can't sell from here." He said, "Get up, don't be silly." Of course, he would probably go away and laugh, because he had a good sense of humor.

Riess: Who were the most famous, fabulous salesmen, other than your father? Was there someone that you were supposed to learn from?

Gump: No, not particularly. But my father did tell me something. He said, "Always give them a story." And I found out when I studied public speaking what he meant by "Always give them a story." You don't say, "It's 263,000 miles to the moon." That doesn't mean anything. The average person can't imagine 263,000 miles. So you say, "If you got on a 747 going at 500 miles an hour, it would take you so long to get there." Then it's more of a vivid picture. And they told us always to give pictures like that, never big numbers.

Riess: Yes. That's a good point. Were the salesmen at that time actually trained by anyone?

Gump: No. It was a matter of luck.

Riess: How did your father pick his salesmen then?

Gump: He didn't. He just listened to them.

There was one woman there--I won't say who she was--she made up stories about the Oriental stuff. The most impossible, crazy stories I ever heard. I said, "What? She said that?" "Yes." Gee, you could never tell what she was going to say about something. She should have written a new Arabian Nights.

Riess: Who was Stanley Corcoran?

Gump: Oh, he started as a kid in the basement. I remember I was drinking quite a bit as a person would in his early twenties living in Europe, at twenty-one or twenty-two, around there. He said that as a young man he used to drink his lunch, he could hardly keep himself up in the stock aisles. And one time he decided, he said, "I can't keep this up, I'll die." And he quit. He quit for years and years. When he told me about it--he was never a guy to say, "Geez, you ought to be ashamed of yourself." He just said, "Quit." I thought he was a great guy. Later on he thought I had cut him. I hadn't cut him at all. I thought he was wonderful. He had a marvelous

Gump: personality. In all the countries we went to in Europe, everybody loved the guy. He had a wonderful Irish personality. He wasn't from an ignorant Irish family. His father was a veterinarian for the U.S. Army, for the Cavalry horses.

Riess: You went on a buying trip with him then?

Gump: No, I was there. He picked me up and he said, "I'm going to Belgium. Do you want to go with me?" I said, "Sure, I'd love to."

Riess: You were a European buyer for the store from 1927 to 1930?

Gump: I wasn't the only buyer.

Riess: There was some reference to buying for the nouveau riche. Was this your view of who Gump's was serving, the nouveau riche?

Gump: Well, it wasn't necessarily the nouveau riche, but--I was talking to somebody, for instance, who said they would like to open up their business in Texas. I said, "Why?" and he said, "There's a lot of new money there."

Riess: And that's the way San Francisco was in the late twenties. There was a lot of new money and people flocking to Gump's?

Gump: Quite a lot, yes. Not as much as--see, the circulation of people is so much greater now with the airplane. The "big ticket" items sold in January and February then. Today you don't have that. The reason is that very often the wealthiest guys in the country would take a private car and go to San Francisco and then to L.A. or whatever, you see. And that's when the very wealthy people would go west. They don't now, they go at all times.

In those days we had our big sales in January and February. It's not that way now. In fact, our January sales would be equal then, almost, to December. That sounds impossible. December is the gift period, naturally, with Christmas. I wouldn't say it was exactly the same. But now January would be one-fifth of December, or maybe even less. In those days it might be close to the same, depending on any big sales. And that pattern changed completely because of planes.

III FINDING AN IDENTITY

Art Deco Pioneer

Gump: I really pioneered what they call "Art Deco" today. I did the first design in San Francisco. My brother was in partnership with some guys we knew in school and they went into the restaurant business, a place called The Clock. It was right near the Call-Bulletin building, a block down from the Palace Hotel. Then they decided to move up to this other place, and to make a long story as short as possible, the thing flopped. But the design of that place--I looked at a book of illustration called "Exposition des Arts Decoratifs," or something like that. It came out in 1925 and '26 when they had this big show in Paris. That's when they started what we call now "Art Deco." They didn't have that term then.

And so I thought I would design some of that. I don't think I could find any of it, but I actually did design that stuff. And I did invent something that was never done before, and it's all over now. That was, at the counters they always had stools, you know, the round stools. I said, "Well, why can't we remove those stools. We'll take those bases and then get those chairs that are cheap, and put the chair backs on top." So instead of stools, we had backs on them. And I invented that.

The same as I invented the chrome letters on our truck. That was done in 1932, I remember. The chrome letters I did with Ben Davis, who was working with us. He's still alive; I see him every once in a while. He was a designer for the Interior Design Department. He was a graduate of architecture from the University of Washington.

Riess: So you would say that you were putting your imprint on the store in terms of design. You don't think that the art works that you were bringing back from Europe were--?

Gump: Well, yes, I brought back—I remember Stanley said, "Let's try this. It used to go very well at the turn of the century." You know what it was? I wish I had a load of that now: Gallè glass. The price it would bring now! They don't make it anymore.

Nights in the Art Gallery

Riess: Did you buy early Picassos and Matisses in Paris?

Gump: I did better than that--I had one of the best shows in San Francisco when I was running Gump's Gallery. I had Renoir, Cezanne, two or three Segonzacs. I wasn't necessarily going into that period, but I was studying that same sort of painting and drawing in art school in the evening. I didn't tell you the greatest story of all.

Riess: No, we haven't mentioned you in art school!

Gump: Well, I'm getting on that now. It's right in that field. As I was studying there I also arranged to get out of New York a show for our gallery, which was quite large and octagonal, of Foujita drawings, nude drawings. I got that whole show and I had it in San Francisco. We sold a couple of them and brought a lot of traffic in. So what happened was I said to the kids I was in the art school with--I did life drawing in the evening three times a week—I said, "I'll tell you, let's next week get Sadie"--the model that we used--"and we'll get her to pose in the gallery and then we'll do drawings of her in the style of Foujita."

So I cooked that up, see. It was wonderful. Here's this girl lying naked in the middle of the gallery and the night watchman comes out and almost falls over. "What's going on here?!" I had to explain to him. You can imagine what a shock that was. Here's this reserved, very quiet place. It's about 9:00 in the evening, and he walks in and there's a girl lying naked in the middle of the great big room. But we didn't do it to shock him, we did it more to get the style of Foujita, which I learned.

As a matter of fact--this is something interesting. I remember telling them at the art school, "Why don't we, every Friday when we do the quick sketches, go through the history of art?" Like when I went through the history of music I wrote music the way they did in the various periods. For instance, one night we'd have Dürer drawings around, something like that. Another night we would have Boucher. Just the reproductions. It could be at the art school. And then we would draw the model like that. Just to go through the history of art.

Gump: And then you would finally end up with the distortions and stuff that we arrived at today, and you would know what they came out of. The same as Picasso who did these wonderful drawings. In fact for my lectures, one lecture I showed two drawings at once. And I said, "Now look--isn't that nice?" "Oh, yes, it's beautiful." And then I said, "Well, the other one is a crazy-looking thing. It's by the same artist." "What?" "Yes, they're both by Picasso." One of them was a very literal and early thing, and the second one is--not a distorted face, which he started to do around 1940-something, in the late forties, I think, when he did these double-face things. No it was an earlier period.

Riess: Well, he actually did some copies of early works.

Gump: Oh, he did the same thing. Sure, he went to the Prado.

Riess: He did the Velasquez.

Gump: Any student did that. He is a marvelous draftsman. The only difference between him and Dali is that Dali kept on the same craft. He was a marvelous craftsman. Of course, some of his subject matter is sort of screwy, but it's interesting. I wouldn't mind having a Dali. Not because it's Dali, but I find it fascinating, his approach. I don't like a thing just because it's original.

Investor Buying of Art

Gump: But I've discussed that before. If a thing's original that doesn't mean that it's worthwhile having, unless you paid $10,000 for it and you find that it's now selling in the market for $150,000. I know guys who buy stuff like that. I know a man who's in the music business--I've met him down in the South Seas--who told me about how he would buy a certain guy's works. He said, "I don't know if it's any good. I know it's going up in value." Now that to me is crazy, but an awful lot of buying is done that way. And I'm telling you there's going to be an awful crash when people get tired of it; that's going to kill a lot of that abstract stuff. I've studied cubism; I know what it's about. It's not as if I don't like it because I don't understand it, you know. But there's going to be a trend back to realism.

Riess: Was a lot of the buying at Gump's investor buying in that way?

Gump: Well, it was from the viewpoint of my father who knew William Keith quite well and bought quite a few Keiths. I've grown up with a bunch of Keiths. My brother and I ended up giving them all to St. Mary's College. We didn't like Keith. Now he's very strong and

Gump: coming back. I remember my father mentioning quite a few people who are very strong now. It's just like talking about a stock, it's funny.

Talk about things coming back—I remember we had an altar set, a K'ang Hsi, I think it was, in the Oriental Department. Or was it Chia Ching? No, it's Chia Ch'ing, not Chia Ching. Chia Ching is Ming. [Wade-Giles spellings]

Riess: I don't know how to spell any of this stuff.

Gump: They don't know how to spell it either, so don't worry. No, they change the spelling. Just recently they changed Sung to Song. [Pinyin] I was brought up with Sung--but we won't go into that. [laughter] I guess with the new spelling you can buy things for a Song--gives one pride of possession. [laughter]

So we had this jade altar set, beautiful. There was an incense burner in the middle, and a pair of candlesticks and a pair of vases. It was a marvelous set. And I remember telling Mr. Wheeler, Joe Wheeler, I said, "Well, maybe we ought to get rid of it. They don't sell anymore. The stuff that's selling now is the tomb stuff, the Tang, and things of that kind." He was always very respectful; he called me Mr. Richard. He said, "Well, Mr. Richard, I think that it will come back someday." Of course, that same set today would be worth a fortune. I think we paid them $40 for it in the early days of the Oriental Department. It was lying in there ever since we first bought Oriental stuff. And it's a very fine set. And it's gone up at least a hundred times in value from what we paid for it. So there's a kind of cycle in all this.

Riess: Did people like Mr. Wheeler have a kind of tender concern for you?

Gump: Oh yes, he was always very nice. And I was always very courteous to him, and we had a courteous rapport.*

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*Ed Wheeler, who died about 1916, 1917, Joe Wheeler's brother, he was a man with a magnificent imagination. He brought in a pair of vases and he said, "Well, what'll we call them? They're supposed to be Kang shi, but let's call them the General Grants." I didn't know why, but he said, "It's a name; it makes them important." That sort of thing, he built in things.

California School of Fine Arts

Riess: And all during this period you were in art school, at the Art Institute?

Gump: California School of Fine Arts, under Spencer Macky. And Macky told my father I was one of the best draftsmen they had at the California School of Fine Arts.

They also had Arnold Blanch out here teaching at the same time. He taught the opposite way of looking at a nude than from Spencer Macky. It was very interesting. For instance, if you went into Blanch's class--you weren't supposed to be taking it; that was supposed to be an advanced painting class--we would go in there and get his ideas of how the nude should be done.

Well, verbally I can describe it. Macky's is the idea from Cezanne, where you have what you call "les tons qui passent," which is also known as "passing tones." Very often you'll see a painting and you'll see where the background runs into the object in front. And that gives it a roundness. I can show you. If I can find a painting I did, one of the best ones I did, I'll show you. I definitely tried to do that. But that was Macky's system that he learned in Paris as a young man. That was his idea, that the background blended into the foreground. And you'll see that in Cezanne; that's what's so fascinating about his work.

Arnold Blanch is just the opposite. He outlines all around--not heavy outline, but he separates completely. The background never went into the foreground, or the nude, or whatever it was.

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Riess: Was Lee Randolph at the California School of Fine Arts?

Gump: Yes, he was there. I didn't study with him.

Riess: Otis Oldfield?*

Gump: Yes. Oh, I learned a lot from him. He was in Paris as a young man when cubism came in. And he showed me what cubism was. And I got these people talking about cubism, and I'd say, "You don't know what you're talking about."

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*Helen Oldfield, Otis Oldfield and the San Francisco Art Community, 1920s to 1960s, Regional Oral History Office, 1982.

Gump: When I worked in the drafting room at MGM, there was a kid there, working there as a draftsman, an affable young guy, a very good designer. He said, "This is the architectural section of MGM." I said, "If you want, I can show you the theory of cubism just quickly so when you're doing this abstract stuff you'll know something about it." He said, "Fine." So I showed him quickly what it was, the basic idea of cubism, which Otis Oldfield taught me. And he got it from the guys who were experimenting with it.

Riess: That's great.

Gump: So I really got the background. I didn't get something out of a book. Very often you see somebody give a lecture on some artist, or on cubism, or surrealism, or whatever it is. And they're talking about it but they don't really know what the approach is. Now, for instance, I said I decided we'd do Art Deco--the term wasn't used when I did this restaurant design, but I had studied it in that book.

Riess: While we are talking about your art work, you took classes with the watercolorist Richard Yip?

Gump: Oh yes, much later, in 1955 and 1956. He was a terrific teacher, and I'll tell you why he's so good, since we're on that subject. When I did watercolors before they looked very pale, like watercolors. In fact, I have one over here in my bedroom. I'll show you in a second. The guys in England thought it was wonderful. They could put it up and show it at Spink's and they knew it would sell right away. [Spink & Son, Ltd., London art dealers from whom Mr. Gump buys and to whom he sometimes consigns.] But I don't do that type of painting anymore. That was a paler palette.

Now, having studied with Yip, I have a very powerful palette. Some of my subjects are as strong as in oil; the colors are that heavy. Not heavy, but they're just thick, and I'm not afraid to use them. Yet they look like watercolors because you have the wet paper when you're doing them to get that blending and stuff that you can't get in oil. And if you do the dry stuff--not dry brush, that's another technique--like the English watercolors, very pale, little strokes, like painting china or something, they don't have the power that Yip taught me.

How I got to him, I saw the work of a friend of ours over in Sausalito and I asked about it. I said, "Gee whiz, that's terrific! How did you get that?" Because it looked so professional and finished. And she said she studied with Yip--she's a housewife. So the next time the classes came around I studied with him. I found it increased my power in the palette, and various techniques that I had been reading about. He has taught me quite a lot.

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Ankor, Cambodia, 1965, by Richard Gump

Church near Venus Point, Tahiti, 1962, by Richard Gump

San Francisco Artists

Riess: Other people at the School of Fine Arts were Piazzoni--did you take anything from Gottardo Piazzoni?

Gump: His name is very Italian. [in Italian dialect]

Riess: The name is very Italian, yes. Well, how about Beniamino Bufano?

Gump: Oh, I know Benny. He's wonderful. I can tell you some funny stories about him. I got along very well with Benny, but you know, he could be very insulting.

I had a lot of fabric woven down in Mexico during the war. It wasn't selling. He walked in and I asked if he liked it, and he said, "Yes." I said, "Take some." And he had a jacket made out of it. He looked wonderful, too. It was rather heavy stuff; it was all wool, done in Mexico. "Genuine imported Mexican wool." [laughs]

I'm not trying to say how charming or generous I was to Benny, but I always got along quite well with him. I bumped into him one night at Trader Vic's. I was with my niece. She was saying how amusing he was, because he was very amusing. One of my wives bumped into him on a plane and she said, "What are you doing?" (She was coming up from Mexico, I think.) And he said, "I've just been down in South America, cementing relations." [laughter] Isn't that a wonderful line?

Riess: Yes.

Gump: There's more. Boy, you could write a book of Benny Bufano stories.

Riess: How about George Post?

Gump: Oh, I knew him, and I like his work.

Riess: Would he have been in school with you?

Gump: I don't think so. He could have been, but you see, I only went to the evening classes. A funny thing. I went there in 1931 and I went there ten years later in 1941. And I don't know which is which. I have some drawings from both periods and I can't tell which is which.

Riess: Were Dorothea Lange, Maynard Dixon, all those people in town in the thirties?

Gump: Oh, Maynard Dixon was here, yes.

Riess: Are you part of the Bohemian crowd?

Gump: No, I was younger than that whole group. I couldn't have been part of that; they're older than I am.

Riess: Jacques Schnier told me a story about being in his studio in the Montgomery Block, and you and your band came and played or something like that.* Did you have a musical group in the thirties?

Gump: It might have been some Tahitians; I don't know. Auge [August] Goupil. I met him through my sister.

Riess: That's it! How about people like Albert Bender?

Gump: Well, I know my mother knew him. But I didn't know him.

Groups and Snobs

Riess: I'm trying to put you into some niche.

Gump: No, I'm a maverick in any group. I didn't go to Juilliard, so I'm not in that group. I didn't go around with any Bohemian group. I didn't go around with any particular group. I might fall in with some group just for a while, because we had something in common. But I didn't always stick with any group. I wasn't that way.

Lots of people join groups or are a part of groups because they feel more secure around people who think the same as they do. I'll give you a perfect example. Some people talk about the snobbish business of wealthy people. You start to think about it--I'm not defending myself, because I'm not that rich--most people like to be members of the Bohemian Club, the P.U. [Pacific Union] Club, or whatever it is, because they're with a group of people who think the same and they're comfortable. They get with people who don't think the same and they're uncomfortable. That's why they have this herd instinct. So it's not a question of snobbishness at all.

I've been with people, for instance, down at the Burlingame Club. I was going out with a girl who was a member there for a while. And I got along perfectly all right because I'd adjust to

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*Jacques Schnier, A Sculptor's Odyssey, Regional Oral History Office, 1987, p. 65.

Gump: that group. And I found a lot of old friends of mine there. I remember I hadn't seen Pete Folger for about four years. He and I were in the same class at Potter. So I adjusted. People would say, "Oh gee, Pete Folger!" He was just Pete Folger to me.

My sister was a terrible snob. W. Clemens Horst was an enormous dealer in hops. He supplied hops to the German breweries. I went to school with him and I remember saying to my sister, "I'm going to see Bud Horst this evening. Do you want to see him?" She said, "Don't call him 'Bud.'" I said, "What the hell?! I call him 'Bud,' and if he doesn't like it, he doesn't have to talk to me." So naturally I called him Bud right in front of my sister. "Oh, that's terrible." But then she realized that Bud could take it from an old friend. Maybe not from some guy he just meets in his office. He doesn't want the "Bud" business, any more than I like first names too much.

I'm very snobbish that way. The reason I'm snobbish that way, or defensive or whatever you want to call it--it's not a question of not wanting to be friendly, it's a question of there being certain divisions in society, and it makes you more comfortable if you know what division you're in. If suddenly somebody calls me by my first name, I don't know what this is all about. Ordinarily you would call me Mr. Gump.

For instance, the other day at the hospital a nurse I had just met said, "Do you want to be called 'Richard' or 'Mr. Gump?'" I said, "It's more comfortable for me if you call me 'Mr. Gump.'" I just feel more comfortable with people I don't know.

Riess: The informality is supposed to make you feel more comfortable?

Gump: I think so. Because they think I'm a hail fellow, well met, "Oh sure, call me Dick!"

Riess: Well listen, I think that's a good place to stop.

Living in Europe, 1927-1928##

Riess: You were in Europe for eighteen months, 1927-1928?

Gump: Yes, that's right. I had a studio in Neuilly sur Seine. All I studied was French life, mostly French night life. [laughs]

I also would follow up tips we had about going to see producers of stuff that might be good for the store. I went to many of these places in Paris. And in 1927 Stanley Corcoran, whom I mentioned before, came through and we went up to Brussels and then we also

Gump: went up to Amsterdam. Then I flew from Amsterdam back to Paris and from then on I didn't do much with the store because he had left Europe.

Then after that, in 1927--this was a major thing--you know the famous Orient Express? Well, I took that very run, except not from London, but the very run from Paris down to Venice where my mother was waiting for me. We had part of a palazzo there, which was terrific. I couldn't speak any Italian then, but she left me alone just with servants who could only speak Italian. They didn't even speak French. My French wasn't too good then either. But I did learn to speak. The best thing I remember, after I had been there a month I made a date with a barmaid. So it shows that love will force all kinds of languages out of people, good and bad.

Riess: You weren't going to teach her English, I take it.

Gump: No, I wanted to learn Italian. I didn't want her to learn English. She might hear what I was saying to these friends of mine!

Riess: So did you really study art seriously?

Gump: When I was in Europe?

Riess: Yes.

Gump: Not particularly, no. When I talk about night life, that's true.

A funny thing happened--I went to our agent's office every once in a while, an agent for Gump's. And there I got to know one of the junior owners of this series of offices. He was an English guy, and I got to know him quite well. In fact, I've seen him up until he died a couple of years ago. But because he was English, I got to run around Paris with a whole bunch of English fellows. It was quite amazing.

So when our buyer came the next year, I said to him [in English accent], "Hello Stanley, how are you?" He said, "Where did you get that accent?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Where did you put on that English accent?" I didn't know that I had adopted that. I don't know if it's "adapted" or "adopted." I haven't adopted it yet; it was adapted at the time, because I was going around with these English guys. On the other hand, this English friend of mine thinks he's putting on an American accent, and it sounds like hell. I hope my English accent was better than his American.

But anyway, it's so difficult. I know how difficult it is. It's intonation in all foreign languages. I found that out years ago. My Russian is supposed to be excellent. I studied mostly the sound, intonation. And you might say the cadences are very

Gump: important. I'll give you an idea in French very quickly. [gives example in French] My brother used to put an gu:tural "r" in there and he sounded like a German trying to speak French.

Agents for Gump's in Europe

Riess: When you talk about agents for Gump's, what was the store's relationship to these agents?

Gump: Oh, they had to see about the shipping and all that. Shipping and the whole thing. And look to sources for new things to sell the public.

Riess: How did your father make these connections with the agents?

Gump: He didn't. I think it was Mr. Newell who made them. Just say the management of the store made the connections. You don't have to get into detail. The management of the store made these connections.

On one trip, as a matter of fact, they didn't have anybody to go up to Belgium at the time. There were two buyers who were using that same office, one of them from Omaha and the other one from Detroit. And they always traveled together, these two guys. They were like a vaudeville team. And so the agent said, "Can you go up to pick them up? Because you speak French, would you take them up to Belgium?" So I did that. They were given the addresses of people to see, and then I would make notes for them.

Riess: They were traveling for specialty stores? They had stores in Omaha that were like Gump's?

Gump: Not like Gump's, but they had the same sort of stuff in that field, European stuff, European gifts. And then the other one in Detroit I've forgotten. But we could look it up.

But I have to tell you a funny story about them. We were in Utrecht in Holland--we had gotten through Belgium--and we were sitting around at dinner, and I told them, "Earlier this year I went down to Spain. I wanted to buy some stuff for the store." (I had a request for a lot of antique Spanish furniture for a place down in Monterey, the Jacks of Jack's Peak and all that.) One of them, Ollie Eldridge the guy from Omaha said, "You know, I think maybe we ought to go down to Spain." And this guy from Detroit says, "For Christ's sake, Ollie, as far as the people in Omaha are concerned, Spain is a breakfast food. It won't do any good." [laughter]

Furnishing a Monterey Adobe: The Jacks

Gump: I had a reason to go there. I had to buy a bunch of antiques for one of the Jack sisters. I had forgotten all about it. I had the plans of the room that was to be fixed, and I had quite a bit of antique Spanish stuff picked out for that room. That was fine; it was exactly what they wanted.

Riess: How did you start working for the Jacks?

Gump: It was an amazing thing. This little lady came into the store. We learned long ago you can't tell anything about people by how they look or how they dress. As I used to tell people in my lectures, if they have a lot of chinchilla or diamonds on, don't give them much time because they've spent it all already. [chuckles]

But anyway, this little lady said, "I have a place down in Monterey and I'm fixing up an office. I like this table." And I said, "Well, what is it for? What is the place that you have?" She said, "It's an old adobe in Monterey." (It happened to be the oldest adobe right in Monterey! It's a famous building. And they had their office upstairs.) I said, "Well, you don't want that." It was a nice sale of a Chinese lacquer table, but I wouldn't let her buy it. I said, "What you want is something like this."

She went on to describe what her place was, and I realized what building it was in Monterey because there are not a lot of adobes all over Monterey. And that's how I got the commission to buy her furniture for that office. It was all antiques, appropriate for early Californians.

Americans in Paris

Riess: Who did you run into in Paris? Hemingway? Picasso? Tell me about the cafe scene when you were there.

Gump: We knew some American expatriates around Paris. My mother knew quite a few because she was a great friend of Sally Stein, the sister-in-law of Gertrude Stein. And I may have bumped into Hemingway at the time because I saw quite a few of those people every once in a while. But I'm not going to say I met him, the way some people would. We probably met, and he probably wasn't impressed by me and I probably wasn't impressed by him, so that's not news. I don't think there's much to talk about.

Riess: Well, I won't pursue this, but you would know.

Gump: No, I wouldn't know, because at that time these people weren't so well-known.

Riess: And the artists? How about the artists?

Gump: I remember going to La Coupole, at the corner of the Boulevard de Raspail and the Montparnasse. And every afternoon, from 4:00-6:00, you would see the Japanese artist Foujita there. He was so obviously different. You don't see a lot of Japanese with bangs sitting around cafes in Paris. That gathering place was changed later to Deux Magots.

More Adventures in the Art Gallery

Riess: Then was there a period later that you were buying Matisses and Picassos and so on?

Gump: I didn't necessarily buy them. Just say there were shows I had of them.* At that time I was able to get all kinds of stuff out of New York on consignment for shows.

Riess: From New York art galleries?

Gump: Yes, sure. And I had some very important stuff. I had a whole show of Rembrandt etchings, and I had another show of Durer prints, both wood blocks and etchings.

Riess: And they didn't move in San Francisco?

Gump: Oh, those moved pretty well, sure.

Riess: More affordable?

Gump: Yes, they were way down in price. My God, some of the prices I can't believe. But if you start thinking of that, you think about some piece of real estate you could have bought for $2,500 and it's

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*In reading about the death May 9, 1988, of Alexander Fried, renowned San Francisco art and music critic for 51 years, Mr. Gump dictated this note to Mrs. Riess: "When I was running the Gallery back in 1931, the Chronicle sent Alexander Fried up to see my show of modern paintings. He said to me, 'You tell me about this stuff. I am a music critic. I have never handled anything like this as an art critic.'"

Gump: worth a quarter of a million. I mean, I never think of that. You're crying over spilt milk, and there's an awful lot of spilt milk in the art business that you could cry about.

There's something in the Wilson book about running the gallery. I was criticized for buying these old masters, and my brother said I was ahead of my time. I wasn't ahead of my time. Nobody backed me up on the stuff. And that's when I quit.

I can give you an idea of the prices then. I had the "Flight Into Egypt" of Pieter Brueghel the younger. (I had a proper authentication from De Groot, who is a top guy on Brueghels.) And all Brueghel did was paint this scene of where he lived, and then put figures in there, Mary on a donkey and next to her St. Joseph, of course. And little Jesus you can hardly make out. But anyway, they're in this scene in Flanders. I could recognize the village. He did that very often. I had that for sale for $4,500. Well, just a couple of years ago the same painting was for sale for $65,000 at the Biennale in Florence, held in the Strozzi Palace. And that would have been cheap then, $65,000 for that now! But imagine, I had it for sale for $4,500. So if you start talking about what you could have bought something for and what it's worth twenty years later, you'd be going crazy about all the stuff you bought or missed.

Riess: When you were running the gallery did you really try to sell people on things?

Gump: I gave the shows as much publicity as we could afford. You have to remember, that was right after the crash in '29. I was running it in 1931 and part of '32.

Riess: I read that later Robert Arneson and Nathan Oliveira and Wayne Thiebaud had their first shows at Gump's.* Is it appropriate to say that you discovered Arneson, Oliveira, and Thiebaud?

Gump: I don't know them very well. I can't be associated with that. To say "we" discovered such artists--the implication is I did it. And I'm not claiming that. So you can't say "we" discovered.

Riess: Would the person who was running the gallery go out and find artists?

Gump: No, the people would bring their works in. Or else we would hear through a friend about such-and-such an artist who was doing some very interesting stuff, and we should go out and see his work. I found a guy down in Mexico who was marvelous. He was totally deaf,

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*"California Living Magazine," San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, April 21, 1985, pp. 11-13.

Gump: stone deaf. He was a great artist. And he happened to be very red, very communist. Well, not he--his father was. But they were inspired people. I don't know what happened to him. He probably went to Cuba like another friend of mine who was very communist. And I understand he was taken out and shot because he didn't go by what they wanted.

On Turning a Profit

Riess: Does the Art Gallery make money for the store, or is it just a very nice thing?

Gump: Some years it would, some years it wouldn't. It depends how things sell. Obviously it didn't make any money when I was in charge. That's why they say if I wasn't the boss's son I would've been canned years ago. You know, you have that quote in there. [see p. 68]

Riess: But what was your sales style? Your father presumably would have made the sale on a personal basis?

Gump: Not necessarily, because there wasn't a big profit on it. [laughs] It was being consigned, you see. There wasn't a big markup like on what we used to call the big ticket items. See, the stuff he bought in the Orient was before people even appreciated it--I remember there was a vase for sale.

Riess: No, wait--you're saying that on the big ticket items the markup is all yours?

Gump: Oh, certainly. But lots of times we didn't even know how to mark the stuff. Because, let's say we had a K'ang Shi vase that maybe we bought in the early days, before the Fair in 1915. We may have bought that thing for $25, an authentic K'ang Shi vase. Now $2,500 would be cheap for it.

You see, they kept thinking that way all the time. As a matter of fact, the trouble with the store right now is that the people from New York want this quick turnover. They don't think of holding something for maybe five years and it goes up ten times in value. They can think of growth in stocks, but they never think of growth in inventory. They think you should turn it over.

My father was the opposite. He had the idea of sitting on it and waiting for it to get in fashion. You had to think two ways in running that business. For instance, a pattern in china, let's say a Lenox pattern in china that sold well, until we got these experts coming in the store who told us how to handle it, we would reorder

Gump: down the whole line of china. Not that particular pattern, and not only that particular manufacturer. It might have included Spode and Wedgwood and everything else. We would reorder according to our sales.

Well, that's not a good way to do it. You do it to promote most what sells best. And so we found out that we were promoting stuff that's hardly turning over, but then we would neglect stuff that was turning over very fast. And then we would neglect keeping the stock.

Riess: When you had art on consignment from galleries in New York, what was the profit there?

Gump: Oh, sometimes it would be double, which is all right. We didn't have our money laid out in it. We didn't buy it; it was all there as investment. And they would figure it's fine, because that was during the time when things were awful. Particularly in New York where things were way down and people were getting reserved seats to jump out windows.

(I anticipate nothing as bad as that crash, but I anticipate a terrific--not depression. What's the other word they use now?

Riess: Recession?

Gump: Yes, recession. I don't know the difference. But anyway, I anticipate an awful crash.)

Marriage to Frances, 1928

Riess: Tell me about your first marriage. Where did you meet your wife?

Gump: I met her in the store, and she since that time has become a famous interior decorator down in southern California. She has marvelous taste. She was in the Oriental Department.

Riess: You mean she was working in the Oriental Department?

Gump: Yes.

Riess: And what is her name?

Gump: Frances Broberg Moore. She's got excellent imagination and taste.

I left after we had met, and went to Europe. I forgot all about her. Then somebody said, "You should go and see her again." I came back here in 1928 and I found her still in love, so we got married. She was in love with me, I guess; I don't know. We were separated in '32.

Riess: Where did you live during that first marriage?

Gump: We lived in an apartment on Pacific Avenue, quite nice. In fact, when they built it she was able to tell the guy how she wanted it. It would be very smart today, the way we fixed it. I remember that living room we did the first year. We did it all in sort of Venetian painted stuff. Not the corny Venetian, but the stuff that we found out could be done in Italy in a beautiful style. It's still done today. In fact, the best guy in the world is right opposite my studio there in Florence. Then I think we got tired of it and I made it sort of Georgian the next year. Because each year I was going to Europe to buy, until I quit.

Riess: Do you have pictures of the interiors of your houses?

Gump: It might have been in one of the west coast magazines. I'll tell you one thing—they asked me what was the color of the rug in the bedroom. I remember that. I remember having a Catalan bed, you know, a painted bed. It was quite attractive. And I said, "Well, I don't know. Call it mouse grey." So they used that expression, mouse grey. Now do you know mice at all, or rats? You'll find all kinds of greys, from black to white. So mouse grey doesn't mean anything.

Like sand color--I remember one time the head of the Honolulu store said, "Get me a couple of samples of sand color." I said, "Okay." So I go into her office, and I bring a white velvet and a black velvet. She said, "No, I asked for sand color." I said, "This is sand color. The white one is the Carmel sand, and the black one is the sand of Kalapana. So when you say sand, I don't know what you mean? Do you mean beige? What do you mean?" But they use these expressions, you know. They say sweaters in such-and-such colors. I don't know what the hell color it is. If they say hunter's green, you've got a pretty good idea, but I notice there are at least ten different colors that are blue. Marine blue, navy blue--they'll use these terms. Jade green---of course, jade green is all kinds of colors.

Riess: Isn't your ring what is commonly thought of as jade green?

Gump: Well yes, "Imperial" jade green. I used to tell people in my lectures that if they would think of the 17th of March then they'd know what the right color for jade is. And they would say, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "St. Patrick's Day green. It's the perfect color for the best jade if it's translucent and not opaque." Not translucent like plastic, but with some depth to it.

But I can't remember why we separated, the reason for it. It wasn't any nasty situation or anything like that. I guess we just didn't get along, or something.

Riess: Was she very interested in her career?

Gump: No, not at that time. She left the store and then she went to work for Lee Eleanor Graham, who was a famous west coast decorator. She learned quite a lot from her.

Riess: And that was 1932?

Gump: That's when we separated.

Misunderstood

Riess: Yes, but that's also the time that you left the store. Why did you leave?

Gump: Well, the reason was very simple. My brother, I remember, I was over at his home and he said, "You know, Rosenblatt and I were saying that if you weren't the son of the boss you would have been canned long ago." And I said, "Isn't that nice?" I remember not saying anything until the next morning. Then I walked into my father's office and I told him I was quitting.

What I was trying to do was build up an appreciation of old paintings. Also of modern art. Nobody in the store really understood good paintings, period paintings, nor did they understand some of the new approaches toward modern art which I was studying at the same time at the School of Fine Arts.

Riess: Did you get a lot of support for what you were trying to do from museum directors in the city?

Gump: Well, they appreciated what I was showing, sure. Another thing that happened—I got to know quite a few of the students over at the art school. I'd say, "Come in and see it." And my father kept saying, "You're spending too much time on these students. They'll never buy anything." Well, for all I know, maybe in the future they may have made a lot of money and become great artists, I don't know. But we just had a lot in common, and I wanted to show them--I told you the story about Foujita and the model.

Riess: Yes.

Gump: Well, that's typical of what my approach toward them was.

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Riess: I had read that you were trying to get the Palace of Fine Arts as an exhibition space for young artists.

Gump: I don't remember about that. Lloyd Rollins, who took over the deYoung Museum, built up the attendance there. And I worked with him quite a bit. I saw that he was imaginative and was turning that museum into something that the public would appreciate.

Riess: So you worked with him by lending things for exhibition?

Gump: Well, we had certain things like that we did. I can't remember exactly, but I tried to cooperate with him as much as I could in those days. And then, you see, after that I got to know Walter Heil very well. He was excellent and did a marvelous job at the deYoung. And Tom [Thomas Carr] Howe I knew rather well, at the Legion of Honor.

Riess: And so they would have seen Gump's as a legitimate force for art.

Gump: Well, downtown at least. Maybe I took some of the attendance off of the museums, because they would come into Gump's instead of going way out to the Park or the Legion.

I used to go to the museums a great deal. I remember one time there was a show at the Legion of Maurice Sterne's drawings—I guess it was nudes, I can't remember, life drawings we called them. And I remember looking at his stuff, and I learned something about the way he did some of his stuff. I adapted that style once in a while.

Riess: I read in Carol Greene Wilson's book of your speaking to the art section of the Commonwealth Club to plead for "public encouragement of creative artists"--and the Commonwealth Club formed a group to buy paintings and hold them and then sell them?

Gump: I did get a group together, and then I don't know what happened to it. I think I left the store right after that, so that I didn't follow it through. I couldn't very well, waiting for a job in Hollywood.

Riess: Okay. So you decided that the thing to do was quit because it was too unpleasant.

Gump: Well, it was too unpleasant. I not only had my older brother trying to harpoon me, but at that time one of the store department heads trying to harpoon me because they didn't know anything about what I was doing. If ignorance is bliss, it's folly to be wise. It's horrible to be ignorant is how I should put it. If ignorance is bliss, it's not so blissful as it is destructive.

Riess: But how about your father? Did he stand back and just let all of the fur fly, or did he intervene on your behalf?

Gump: Well, he did as much as he could. But then he didn't know what was going on very well, although he was alert enough. His great love was the Oriental section and his mind was on that.

IV HOLLYWOOD AND HONOLULU, 1932-1941

Hollywood, MGM Drafting Room

Riess: How did you decide what your next port of call was going to be in 1932?

Gump: It's a funny thing. I was leaving the deYoung one time and ahead of me was Sammy Smith, who had worked for us since 1869. And he said, "I was just thinking of you. I hear you're going down to Hollywood. I think that would be a good place for you."

Sammy Smith, the oldest employed man in the United States! [laughs] He weighed my father when he was born. He was sixteen years old in 1869. And he was on our payroll for eighty years. I think it's a world's record. It should be in the Guinness Book of Records. We put his last paycheck up in the personnel department, saying, "People work a long time at Gump's." He had to retire, but we paid him something a month. So that was eighty years that he was on our payroll.

He's also the one--we used to have this long stairway going up to the shop and somebody said, "Gee, you go running up that long stairway." And he said, "Well, I learned a long time ago, the quicker I run up there, the quicker I get it over with."

Riess: What were your connections to Hollywood? Did you know anyone there?

Gump: Well, yes, through Gouverneur Morris. He wrote script stuff for movies. And he introduced me to Cedric Gibbons with the idea of getting a job at MGM which I did get, finally, after about six weeks of waiting out in the drafting room with a bunch of architects who were out of work. I already had competition there because at that time there was no work for these architects. So I had to keep up with these guys.

Riess: And what did the drafting room at MGM do?

Gump: They designed sets. You see, the movies were going like crazy then. People could get away from their troubles by going to a movie. I remember when I lived in Hollywood at the time I would see two movies, Class B and Class A, for twenty-five cents. And all the movies were running hot. And they made money off that. They could figure on enormous releases all over the country because people would have their dream world. We manufactured dream worlds that didn't exist because of the crash.

What I learned there was working very accurately. One job I had, I was given a picture of one of the desks in the Senate Chambers in Washington, and I had to figure this out with a magnifying glass, literally. I made the drawing in about three hours and I remember it was sent to the shop and produced overnight. This is the way they worked there. There were thirty-two of those made, of redwood. They didn't need to do ninety-six because of how they had set the cameras.

That was for the picture, "Gabriel Over the White House." I think the story originally ran in the Post, something like that. And they made a famous movie of it. But I had to work very carefully. It wasn't a question of doodles. You had to do actual detailing. And I did this drawing exactly as the photograph showed. It turned out that my drawing was okay.

Agent and Extra

Gump: Then when I was in Hollywood I tried to get into writing popular songs, and also I became an agent for Polynesian actors.

Riess: You had gone to the South Seas?

Gump: I had been there, yes. And later on I became an agent for a bunch of Polynesians for various movies that were coming up. I was supposed to get ten percent from them, but if I went to collect the ten percent from all of these eighty or ninety guys I had signed up, I wouldn't have made a nickel. So we just forgot about that.

But one time the movie "Hurricane" came up. Because I had something I had to do—I've forgotten what it was—I couldn't help to handle that, supplying the natives for the original "Hurricane." (They did it again recently, I think.) So I turned it over to a Samoan guy, a rather well-educated guy who had written a book. His name was Tufele.

I turned that over to him, and he made quite a lot of money off of that. He got a commission from all of these guys. He wasn't a tough guy or anything like that, he was a very nice person. He said

Gump: afterwards, "You know, you've been so kind to me. Any time you want, you can go to Samoa and live the rest of your life in absolute harmony."

I found out afterwards when I bumped into Admiral Fiske, who was in charge of the Samoan Islands when it was under the navy—I bumped into him out in Hawaii before the war--he said, "Oh yes, Tufele, the family, they're the tops out there. They're wonderful." He said, "You had that invitation? You really had a life there set up for you." Because nobody could live there unless asked. You had to be Samoan. They were very strict.

As a matter of fact, I knew that Hugh Kelley, who co-owned the Bali Hai Hotel on Moorea with Jay Carlisle and Donald "Muck" McCallum--they also had hotels at Raiatea and Huahine--he had some plans to put up a Bali Hai place there--you know, like the ones down in Moorea in the South Seas. And I said, "Well, I doubt if you can put it there." It turned out it didn't work out. Why, I don't know, but I'm pretty sure it's because it's so exclusive, and it's been kept so separate. Now that it's under the Department of the Interior I don't know how it's treated. But when it was under the navy they preserved that just for Samoans.

So this was quite a reward I was given for--I only thought, "Well, here's a nice guy. I'll turn the job over to him." He had already written a book called Dawn in Savai. Savai was the original name of the center of the Samoan Islands, an ancient name.

Riess: The Polynesians that you were able to round up for these crowd scenes were already living in Hollywood?

Gump: Yes, living there.

I got to know quite a lot of American Indians, too. I remember one time I was an extra in a picture, I think it was called "Sutter's Gold." I was sitting on a log next to an Indian guy with a very cultured voice. I said, "I wonder if we're getting back in another scene, or should we just sit around and freeze to death." Because we were in summer clothes but it was winter down in the San Fernando Valley. Always it was reversed. I wasn't doing anything then, and any chance I got to make a few extra bucks, I'd go in there. They didn't pay much in those days, but it was a good experience.

So I'm talking to this guy for quite a while and I think, "Geez, he's got a very cultured voice, but boy he looks like he's been battered!" Well, you know who it was? It was Jim Thorpe!

Riess: Oh really?

Gump: A very nice guy. He's supposed to have imbibed a little bit too much, but he was very nice. We had quite a nice chat. He and I were extras on this movie.

Riess: He's baseball, isn't he?

Gump: Everything. He was in the Olympics. In the first Olympic games he won everything he went in for. Then he turned professional, so they wouldn't put him in the honorary roll. And just recently, after he died, they decided it was okay to put his name down. I think it was after Avery Brundage died, too.

Riess: The reason that you were the agent for the Polynesians--did you speak some language?

Gump: No, no. These jobs came up, and I would supply all the natives, instead of central casting doing it.

One time word got around amongst these natives--let's call them natives, because there were Indians as well, and Mexicans. All of them looked native, you see. What do they call them, Hispanics? The word got around that they were casting for some movie at Paramount. Geez, about a hundred natives showed up, and they blamed me. Some guy who was in charge of central casting whom I knew said, "How did you happen to do this?" I said, "I didn't tell them anything." He said, "I don't know how this news got around." They were going crazy over at Paramount with a hundred natives wanting to know when they go to work. And it was just some gossip that went around. I didn't start that thing. I know who started it. It was a guy who was my assistant. He was a big mouth. He shouldn't have said that.

"My Tane" and ASCAP

Riess: Were you successful in music down there?

Gump: Just before I went there I happened to write this tune, "My Tane." The story of "My Tane" is funny. The Goupils were playing it in their apartment one time. They're a well-known Tahitian family. They were a very famous French family and Gump's in the early days, in the 1880s and '90s, we had prints from them. They used to represent certain prints. Goupil was a famous gallery in Paris. But part of the family went to the South Seas at Gauguin's recommendation. That's how they happened to go there.

Anyway, these Goupil kids were playing this one tune. I said, "Gee, that's a beautiful thing. Let's do something with it." It's just eight bars. They didn't even know how many bars it was, they couldn't read music, but there was a nice sound to this tune. So I put a bridge in it and wrote the lyrics.

Gump: But it didn't get promoted until I bumped into Johnny Noble down in southern California. He was famous for "Little Grass Shack" and a lot of others, too. He said, "That's a good tune. We'll put that on." And he put his name on it, too, of course. And he got a cut. It became quite a big hit. It's still a standard; I still make a few bucks on it. That was written in 1933. [Published 1934, Bourne, Inc.]

You see, when he got ahold of that then it became quite a hit. But he was ASCAP. I didn't belong to ASCAP in those days. It wasn't until maybe twenty years later that I joined ASCAP. If I had been a member of ASCAP--you know what that is, American Society of Composers and Publishers--when I was in Hollywood, I would have probably been able to sell an awful lot of tunes. They would have listened. As I always told people, I am the greatest unpublished songwriter. I have all kinds of tunes. Every possible thing I wrote, because I understood about music. I didn't just do it by ear; I knew what made a thing sound German, I knew what made a thing sound Italian, or South Seas. Whatever it was, I knew the reason for it sounding that way.

Riess: But you just didn't take yourself seriously.

Gump: Yes, I did. But I had no way of getting the stuff in pictures because I didn't belong to ASCAP. They wouldn't touch anything unless you belonged to ASCAP; they didn't want lawsuits, you see, in the studios.

Riess: Well, why didn't you join ASCAP?

Gump: It's very simple: because I wasn't asked. You have to be asked to join, or you have to have somebody with influence to put you in. I got into ASCAP later because of a musician, a very good musician who was in the store one time and asked me if I belonged to ASCAP. I said, "No," and he said, "You ought to be." That's how I got in.

It doesn't mean that ASCAP is good or bad or indifferent. But they can't be taking every guy and his brother and putting them in ASCAP. As it is now, they watch everything that's played of mine, in any form, and I get a cut on it. But you can write absolute crap--put that in there, I don't care--and still you can be an ASCAP member.

Rudolph Schaeffer

Riess: When you were in San Francisco studying art did you consider studying at the Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design?

Gump: No, but I just read where he turned a hundred and one. [Schaeffer died March 5, 1988.] He used to come in the store once in a while. In fact, we gave him a Thai-Khmer Buddha for his school.

Riess: He sounded as if he was an interesting theorist.

Gump: Oh, very. Excellent, as far as I know. I never studied with him, but he was excellent on color. I should have gone to see him, because he remained fairly articulate. I remember he had a sort of flexible mind, the few times I spoke with him. He was one of those people whose minds remained open on subjects they already knew. It is a great quality. Even Frank Lloyd Wright was flexible after he stopped his bullying.

Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright

Riess: Were you interested in the new architecture in Los Angeles when you were in Hollywood, Neutra, Schindler, and so on?

Gump: I got to know them later.

Riess: Did you get to know Neutra?

Gump: Yes, Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright, too.

Riess: There were a lot of immigrant architects who had just come to Hollywood from Germany.

Gump: Gropius and people like that. And Mendelsohn was another one. But he lived here. As a matter of fact, his daughter [Esther] worked for us for a while.

Riess: Had you any personal contact with any of them?

Gump: Not down there, no, but I did get to know Neutra because when I lectured in Aspen in 1952, afterwards there was a big question period and he asked me a lot of questions. He was very interested, and a very nice guy.

Neutra was hired by Breuner's [furniture store] over in Oakland to find out why people didn't go into a certain room. They couldn't figure out if it was the color or the design or something. He sat there for a week trying to figure it out, and finally he realized what it was. You know what it was? It had nothing to do with aesthetics. It was the smell of the carpet. He figured that out. See, everybody thinks everything's always artistic. It isn't. It's a lot of other things.

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Gump: You know, Frank Lloyd Wright--this was a funny thing. I was the secretary to the California Art Association one year. We were asked for a dinner at the Family Club. Henry Swift was president at that time. Frank Lloyd Wright and I got there earlier, by mistake we were an hour early, so I was sitting there with Frank Lloyd Wright. And he said, "Well, Richard, why are you here with this group of artists?" Because I knew him from the store.

I said, "I have more reason to be here than you have, Mr. Wright." "Well, how is that?" "Well," I said, "first of all, you never write any music, do you?" "No." "Well, I do. I'm a composer. I'm sure you're an architect. I don't know about your painting. I don't know if I ever saw any painting of yours, but I'm known for my painting. So I have more reason to be here than you." [laughs]

And I was told afterwards by Kem Weber, who is a wonderful contemporary designer, "That's the way to talk to that guy. He's a terrible bully. If you do that to him, he admires you." Then later on he made some remark, he said, "You know, all music stopped with Beethoven." I said, "That shows you know nothing about music." I said that to Frank Lloyd Wright.

I found out later, it was very interesting--Neutra explained to me the difference between their approach towards architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright believed that architecture whenever possible, particularly in the countryside, should blend into the scenery. You look at that Arizona thing [Taleisen West], you can hardly see it in the hills. And other jobs he's done, he doesn't want to have it stand out.

On the other hand, Neutra's idea is that it's a place for human living. It should look separate. Now, they're both right and they're both wrong.

Riess: What was Frank Lloyd Wright's connection with the store?

Gump: Oh, he just came in. He always came in there. The last time, or a couple of times before when he was there he said to Miss [Eleanor] Forbes--she told me that he said this--"You tell Richard he's doing a wonderful job here." And I told people, "That's the first time I've ever heard him say any complimentary thing about anybody." He loved to criticize.

And then another time--this is funny--he was in the store, and Miss Forbes and I were just going over a book of his plans. I saw him out there. I said, "Speak of the devil, here he is, Miss Forbes." And I said to him, "Look, we're just looking at your book of architecture." So yes, I knew him.

V. C. Morris and Artek

Riess: Was Wright in town because they were doing the V. C. Morris store, by any chance?

Gump: Oh no, he did that before. It's a beautiful job but it's terrible for merchandising. You know what he told me? This shows you—I've used this in my lectures--he said, "You know, Gump, I was tired of people hawking their wares out on the street." He actually told me that. That's fine, except you couldn't hawk many wares inside if you didn't tempt them out on the street. So he didn't have any show windows. It was a beautiful building, beautiful design, but it was impractical as possible. You couldn't use it for anything. I know people who worked there and afterwards they told me how impractical it was. They said, "I didn't like it." "You couldn't sell because of this." "You couldn't sell because of that." It was all practical complaints.

Riess: You mentioned Artek earlier.

Gump: They really did more modern stuff than anybody at that time. It was right after the war when there was nothing. It was modern, and so-called modern stuff. I have one of their chairs in my book, Good Taste Costs No More.

Riess: It was Alvar Aalto designs?

Gump: Yes.

Riess: What is Artek? Who is Artek?

Gump: A designer. And his furniture was made in Finland.

Riess: But it was someone here who was designing things?

Gump: Yes, he designed it, and it was produced in Finland.

Riess: Who's "he"?

Gump: Arthur Pasco I think was his name.

I asked Mrs. Graham to give you this "Time for Taste" article that went into the Retailing Daily right after the war. [See p. 102] I blasted everybody because they did such horrible copies of antiques. I said, "Why can't we bring out some modern design?"

Of course, Eames brought out his chair, not the comfortable chair, but the little one. But they found they couldn't make it unless they could make at least a thousand, to make the form for the

Gump: rear end. The funny thing is, for the original model they told me that they had some girl who did some cheesecake picture. They asked her, "How is it? Is it comfortable?" And she said, "Oh, it's wonderful, just like sitting on somebody's hand." [laughter]

Mother's Death, 1934

Riess: Your mother died in 1934. Was she living in San Francisco then?

Gump: Yes. Well, she was very sick. She had cancer. I saw her fade away; it was awful. She was loaded on heroin, so she didn't suffer too much, but it was pretty bad.

Riess: What would you say was her strongest influence on you?

Gump: She appreciated me. Anytime I told her about some dream I had, or idea, I could see she was captivated by it. She would try to back me up, not on getting it done, but giving me the background for carrying out some of these ideas.

Second Marriage, and Hollywood Scene

Riess: After Hollywood, and after your mother's death, then what is the sequence of events? Next you go off to join the staff in Honolulu?

Gump: Well no, what happened was that my father wrote Mrs. [Alice] Bowen and asked if she could take me on. And she said, well yes, she would be glad to take me on.

Riess: How did you decide you wanted to get back in the fold?

Gump: I can't remember, but I got fed up with Hollywood. I think one of the main things--my brother had enough sense, he told my father, "You ought to give him more money. He has got hardly any money, and people think he's a bum, a remittance man. And that doesn't do Dick any good if you expect him to get anyplace down in Hollywood." Because he knew I was working pretty hard at all the various things I was attempting.

With my second wife I wrote a whole script to a movie, also the music, and I even laid out the sets. I was looking at it the other day and I thought, "That's not bad." It's probably stupid, but a lot of stuff that's stupid came out of that place. I did get the thing shown to one of the guys. He wasn't a prominent director then, but he became quite prominent. He said, "It's very amusing, but I can't handle it now because I don't handle that--" for Hal Roach, or something. We had the idea of Laurel and Hardy doing it, you see. That's one thing I can remember. Now, I don't say there's anything good or not. But there was a lot of effort. Give me "A" for effort.

Riess: But in any case, you were not being subsidized by your father.

Gump: No. If he gave me more, I would get to meet people. Sidney Coe Howard had told me, "Give me a ring sometime." I told you about selling him a very important Thai head. He's a very nice guy and a great playwright. And he said, "Well, give me a ring." So my wife and I had tea with him, or a drink, at the very famous place on Sunset Strip, the "Macambo." And I remember I met a few people there that he knew. And we just had a chat. But, you see, if I was seen in more places like that, which I couldn't afford, they wouldn't think I was some bum.

Riess: Yes. You had a new wife in Hollywood? [Hela Lindelof Lenza]

Gump: Yes, I met her down there. She came over to this country to Chicago under contract to the Chicago Light Opera Company. Then she went to Hollywood with the idea of getting into pictures, which she didn't, but she knew something about singing and acting and shows. She had

Gump: done German light opera, Franz Lehar and things of that kind. We worked on quite a few things together, ideas--but like a lot of those ideas, they go out the window.

By 1938 I was thinking, "Well, I'm not getting anyplace." Then Father said, "I want you to get back, so I'll ask Mrs. Bowen." She had to give permission to have me go out there, not that she could know what she wanted to do with me. She didn't know what I knew. How would she know? My father didn't even know what I could do.

Alice Bowen, Honolulu Gump's

Gump: Anyway, I went to Honolulu in 1939 and it turned out that they already had a girl who was doing sketches of stuff that people wanted, but everybody came to me to do the drawing. I said, "For god's sake, you've got Miss Williams there. She's doing it. Go to her." And they said, "Well, you'll get the thing done quicker and you know what you're doing. You'll get the drawings done for the shop." I said, "I don't want to take her job."

I complained about the people coming to me. I knew why they did. Not that I was so bright. It was just that I had more experience and I knew a trick about presenting your stuff. Later they got another girl who took her place and I showed her how to do my style of sketching, showing things to be done, to show the clients. And after a while I couldn't tell the difference between my drawings and hers because I showed her these certain tricks about doing this stuff. I was using what I learned from Cezanne in drawing furniture. Now that sounds impossible. Cezanne never designed furniture. But it's his method of using the hot and cold, or light and dark. The light and dark more than hot and cold, because we didn't do it in colors--although I did a few in color.

And that went on. Finally, Mrs. Bowen didn't want my name Gump there, that was her bailiwick, her castle. One time Mrs. [Edna Woolman] Chase was there, the editor of Vogue, and Mrs. Bowen said, "Oh, I want you to meet Richard Gump. His father sent him out here to learn decorating from me." I thought, "Oh, geez!"

I got her out of a lot of jams. She would suggest something and I would have to mechanically pull it out of the fire so the thing could be made. I can remember a couple of times when I would go to the head of the shop and say, "How the hell are we going to do this?" He'd say, "I don't know. We'll have to figure out some way."

But she had marvelous ideas, terrific ideas. She actually invented what you see all over the Islands--it's become corny--taking the monkeypod wood—they call it rain tree in Fiji, it's the

Gump: same wood, and it's got another name in India--and making these bowls in the shape of leaves. She invented that, literally; one time she showed me the original drawing; she had the idea. So she had marvelous ideas and excellent taste. And great appreciation of Oriental as well as European stuff.

Riess: Who were the clients in the Islands?

Gump: Local people, and also people who came through the Islands. When I was out there big sales were made like here, in January and February. Then it changed and people suddenly found that you can go there during the summer. So a lot of people came out in the summer also. And I'm talking about people who came out and decided to build there, like Bob Topping.

Riess: Did that store have the same kind of division between Oriental and European?

Gump: No, no. She developed some European stuff, like Dorothy Thorpe glassware that she developed with Island motifs and all that sort of stuff. She did that development herself. And she had these bowls in monkeypod, and that's not Oriental.

Mrs. Bowen was the head of the Outdoor Circle, an outfit that wouldn't allow signs in the Islands. She was responsible for doing that. She just died. I had wanted to see her. This is amazing—I was in Maui, seeing a relative of mine, and he said, "I've just read in the paper where somebody to do with Gump's has just died at ninety-two." I said, "Oh my God, I wanted to see her." I had last seen her with Joan, my present ex-girlfriend. (That sounds funny but we were going together for twenty-five-odd years. She's in Florence now.) We went to see her and Joan thought her place was fabulous, too. She knows all the troubles I had with Mrs. Bowen. I had an awful time.

She [Mrs. Bowen] finally canned me.

Riess: Why?

Gump: Well, this is the story. They were having trouble with her, asking for stuff to be done in the shop and it would have been better if she turned over the shop to me. Then they could go through me to the shop, because we did turn out a lot of stuff there, wonderful new ideas.

Fritz Abplanalp, the head of the cabinet shop, and I wrote to my father. And Mrs. Bowen said, "Your father suggested that I turn the shop over to you. I think I'll do that when you and I can see eye-to-eye." I said, "Did you ever see eye-to-eye with anybody?" And that's when you-know-what hit the fan. For two days she tried to get everybody in the store to say did she see eye-to-eye with them. Of course, what are they going to say? No?

Gump: So she said, "Well, I'm afraid we can't work together, so you should leave." She canned me. I became her boss later and I never even mentioned a thing, ever. I wouldn't do that. Why should I get revenge? Life's too short to be revengeful, although Shakespeare wrote quite a good deal of it.

Riess: You were in your late twenties.

Gump: Well, early thirties.

Riess: Were you starting to mellow a little? What direction has your personality taken?

Gump: Well, I'd stopped drinking, I know that. I didn't drink for twenty-two years. So that helped. When I was out there in the Islands I never was drinking at all, you see, I just didn't. In fact, I went on the wagon just before I went out there. I remember I got to know the head of the dance orchestra at the Royal Hawaiian. One time he had a whiskey and soda up on top of the piano, and mine was plain ginger ale. I had gone on the wagon about four months earlier, and I grabbed his whiskey and soda and took a big gulp of it. Ordinarily they would say, geez, that would fix you. You'd puke quick, you know. But I didn't. I said, "Jesus Christ, that's not mine. I'm drinking ginger ale." I never felt like drinking. I just didn't want to.

But fortunately my whole attitude towards alcohol changed. I've been on the wagon often. I was like Mark Twain stopping his smoking. He said, "It's easy. I've done it at least a hundred times." [laughter] Now I'm only drinking wine. I just won't drink anything else. Although they said I was alcoholic, I don't think so.

Pearl Harbor

Riess: Were you in Hawaii for Pearl Harbor?

Gump: No, I had just come back here. Pearl Harbor was in December, as you know, and I told you before, I had the first performance of my violin-piano sonata, with an audience of seven, and the reason was on account of Pearl Harbor.

A funny thing—I had a lot of life-drawing sketches I'd done over at the art school. (I went back there ten years later--isn't that funny? I was there in 1931 and then I went back there in 1941.) I was sketching and sending them to friends of mine out in the Islands. It was a Sunday and I was in the basement having them

Gump: wrapped up to be sent there and the head of the basement said to me, "I called Matson. They don't know when the boats are coming out. Something about a boat being jammed going into Pearl Harbor." I said, "I don't understand that. Let's turn on the radio and see what's happened." And that's when we found out about Pearl Harbor.

following p. 83

Three photographs at Piazza San Marco, Venice.

Upper left, left to right: Stanley Corcoran, Richard Gump [in derby], Rag. R. "Renzo" Borelli, and two other buyers for Venetian glass,

Upper right: Borelli, Richard Gump, Paul Faria, and Joan Sianta, 1964. Borelli was Gump's agent for Italy.

Below: Richard Gump, Joan Sianta, and Teddy the dog, 1973.

V GUMP'S, SAN FRANCISCO, 1941

Mexico, A New Market

Riess: When your father knew that he had you back in the store, did the two of you hammer out a better working arrangement?

Gump: They didn't know what to do with me. Same old appreciation!

Riess: I wondered what kind of an arrangement you had.

Gump: I didn't have any arrangement. I didn't know what I was doing. He gave me an allowance of $500 a month. I managed to get along all right. I was staying with some old friends of mine down in southern California. And I think I had a car, yes I did, I would get around, go to various parties, etc.

Riess: This is in '41?

Gump: Yes. It was during the summer, because I returned in 1941. You see, my uncle wasn't so hot about my coming into the store. He's my father's younger brother, William. And the reason was that my brother disappointed him terribly, so he didn't know about me. He never liked me particularly, and I never liked him. I always thought he was an idiot, that's all, but he was a very decent guy, William.

Riess: So was the store retrenching during the war because you couldn't get as many things? Was it beginning to have a different feeling when you came back?

Gump: Well, no. I'll tell you what happened. The only market open was Mexico. I went down there with Rudi Blesch. We developed a whole lot of stuff, to the point where there was an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art here of things that Dorothy Liebes had found in Mexico. And half the stuff I designed as being native. In fact later on when I thought I was going to build a place down in Oaxaca

Gump: I went to this architect's home and I said, "My god, I designed these chairs!" And they're all over Mexico! I can show them to you, and I can prove I designed them.

This is interesting, now you're on that subject. This little town of Tenancingo, which is due west of Toluca--there was a terrible road at the time, now you can go very fast, it's all fixed, but in those days it took about a half an hour to go about five or ten kilometers into this town. Tenancingo is where all the chairs were made with the woven seats and backs. They used to do these painted things. All I did was not to have any painting and just have them natural, have the weaving go down the side and the back, and just use spindles.

I'll tell you how I designed them. First of all I made a drawing, an elevation, inch and a half scale, and the natives couldn't read it, so then I made a perspective drawing of it. Well, "We don't know how to make it." So what I did, I took a lot of sticks and put them together to show them how to do it. And I said, "Okay, turn this this way, do it this way." So they did a turn, and they could do that. Then they would do it with lathes and turn them. And that was one guy. And then I said, "All right now, we'll weave it this way." See, different people do it. Finally we developed it in about two days.

Riess: A prototype chair.

Gump: Yes. Well, it's all over Mexico now. As I say, that was in 1942, and it was 1970 when I thought I was going to build the house down in Oaxaca and I went into this architect's place and around his table he'd got all these chairs. I said, "Remember I told you I designed some chairs? Those are designed originally in Tenancingo." There's some other stuff--a lot of tin furniture I designed. They had tin there that we couldn't get here, and they made furniture with tin.

Riess: Because we were saving tin during the war.

Gump: Yes. Of course, it was phony. They used to take the stuff and turn it in so they could use the tin. You really can't use it over again but it made people feel that they were doing something for the war effort.

Riess: Once you designed something and the native village started producing it, then did you have any exclusive right to that?

Gump: No. As a matter of fact I did a lot of stuff that was a terrible flop in San Francisco. It was awful. We took a terrible beating on it.

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Riess: Let's continue discussing your imports from Mexico during the War.

Gump: I went to Toluca, where they do a certain type of weaving. And I thought, that's all very well, but they were regional designs. They said, "Well, they sell to Americans." I said, "That's tourists who have been here. I want them just plain." Okay, that's all right. So I took some basic colors, like natural straw, sort of reed stuff. And a nice carmine red, and green and yellow.

I bumped into a guy who was just developing something for wholesale and we discovered we were doing the same thing, eliminating the regional design. The Mexicans couldn't figure it out, because the American tourists buy it. Well, they're associating it with their trip to Mexico. But when you're putting something on your table you don't know Mexico from a hole in the ground. You want something that is according to your idea of decor, see. He had the same reaction that I did. You've got to eliminate the local stuff, unless you felt it was a good design. Well, that's something that's just a matter of choice, a good or bad design.

Eventually I got to know this fellow quite well. And the next year he became our agent. I bought like crazy then. He said, "You know, you're buying an awful lot. I don't know if your father likes this. You'd better speak to him." This was down in Mexico City, and it was very hard to talk to people between Mexico City and San Francisco. I said, "We'll take a chance." Well, to make a long story as long as possible, I developed quite a lot of things. But it wasn't promoted properly. It was artistically a great triumph, but practically, a disaster.

Riess: The materials that you were developing, the designs that you were working on--did they mix in with a more traditional look?

Gump: They would fit in here.

Riess: They would?

Gump: Well, of course, there's a mixture. But it wouldn't clash. A good example--in Puebla they had pottery. It was pretty solid. It's a sort of an earthenware. And of course they had all the regional stuff. Well, we told them to eliminate that, just put a stripe around it. It was cheap, it was a pretty good deal to get that in. And we were able to sell it rather cheap and get a good profit on it. Then I went overboard buying too darned much of this stuff and inventing too many designs to be done and finally it ended up, to produce what we wanted they were turning out lousy work, not as good as the first year.

Oh, it wasn't a terrible amount. Let's say it was $50,000 worth; $50,000 is nothing. If you'd lose money during the war it didn't matter because you were in an enormous tax bracket anyway.

Gump: Your taxes in those days--let's say you made $100,000. You only kept about $15,000. There was an 85% tax on your profits, not to say anything about the duty on the stuff.

But it added quite a flair to the store. I remember I fixed sort of a tent effect, with stripes—I had to go to Stewart & Co. where they had all the tents.

Riess: Was there already a Mexican population in the city?

Gump: That didn't mean anything.

Riess: The whole Mexican look was unknown to people?

Gump: It wasn't a Mexican look. Call it a Latin American look. It's the local crafts being readapted to our way of living and our way of looking. That's a good quote. I should have thought of that when I was writing Good Taste Costs No More.

[Added later] Speaking of not using local designs, such as a Mexican peon asleep or hauling a burro, this sort of stuff was used on the tin trays, and the tourists bought them, the local color reminded them of their little trip to Mexico, but like the placemats, you wanted what would look nice on a festive board on the other side of the Rio Grande. So I eliminated the sleeping peon design on the tin trays and just used a cross-hatching every half inch. These could be used anywhere. I even use these trays in my place in Florence! I'm sure you've seen them.

The big job of the buyer, no matter where he is, is to ask himself the question, "How would this look at home?" Nine-tenths of local designs are nice to remind one of faraway Patagonia but look awful with our decor. [End of addition]

Inventors and Repeaters

Gump: You know, I found one of the biggest mistakes in merchandising is that buyers don't live the life of what they sell. They don't understand its final use. The guy's a china expert yet he uses a butter plate for dessert because he likes it that way. Yes, but does he think about how you might set a table? You get somebody who did that, he probably would be a lousy merchant, he's so artistic. You've got that clash of the imaginative mind and the plain-thinking mind. Usually the plain thinker is an exception if he's got an imagination, and if he has imagination and watches his stock and all that, there's a good merchandiser. But it's very seldom you get that combination.

SEP 26 1960

RICHARD GUMP'S OFFICE

In a nutshell, I'm not after profit, I'm after a service it's profit we're after. to the public, Let's make it a then the profit will cocoanut shell, be automatic thru not a peanut shell. the law of supply & demand.

EDWARD SCHWARZ

Riess: But you're that combination.

Gump: Ed Schwarz of Amos Parrish--the company who put us back on our feet after the war, after my father died in 1947—this one guy, Ed Schwarz, a very bright guy, he said, "You'll find there are two kinds of people in merchandising." He was also an advisor to Hall of Hallmark Cards, and all kinds of big outfits.* He did some redesigning for Lord and Taylor and a lot of places like that. I think he did some designing or redesigning for Altman's. I don't know. They were doing a lot of this work.

When my father died we were left in a terrible state. All I could think of was the inheritance taxes and how we could handle it. That was when I had the Amos Parrish people come in who were supposed to be experts on how to run a place, you know. And I said, "Now, the first thing I want to know is who should run this place? If you don't think I'm capable to run it, please tell me, because that's my job. I inherited this problem. And if you think somebody else should be running the place, please tell me. There's no sense in putting everything on the shoulders of me if I'm not the right person for running the store, because that means that the whole place will go down the drain."

The Amos Parrish people said, "No, you're the right person to run this place." (Of course, that didn't help Mr. Rosenblatt. He thought he was going to run the place. He and his brother Albert came to the store right after the First World War and they were both there for a while. Then Albert left and went into another business. The funny thing is he would have been marvelous in that store. And the one who stayed there just didn't have the imagination.)

Anyway, Ed Schwarz said, "There are two types. There are the inventors and the repeaters. You'll never get an inventor who repeats. He wants to go into something new."

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*[Added later] Edward Schwarz was an executive vice president of Amos Parrish & Co., Inc. of New York who were hired to analyze Gump's operations 1950-1951. Their extensive report was submitted July 13, 1950 to all Gump's executives at the Clift Hotel. They later handled liquidation of the Honolulu store, March 22, 1951. This, of course, was after A. L. Gump's death. President Richard Gump had heard about the work of Amos Parrish & Co., Inc. from Executive Vice-President Clayre Von Gunten and through Vice-President Martin Rosenblatt's contact, Mr. Hirschfelder, at Capwell's who had used Amos Parrish & Co., Inc. services for a shoe situation.

Gump: That's the way the book business is handled. "What's the latest book?" "Have you still got [H. G.] Wells' history of the world?" "Oh no, we sold that long ago." "Did you ever think that maybe somebody would want to read Wells' history of the world, or [H. W.] Van Loon's history of the world?" "Well, that came out forty or fifty years ago. We don't want that. We've got a new one, it's a wonderful viewpoint about the history of the world." "Well, does everybody know about it?" "No." "Then why don't you promote those that sell?"

I told you once before this motto that they had: "Promote most what sells best." But in the record business and in the book business they promote most which is the latest, period. That's all. I don't know if I mentioned that before.

I've observed it, there are people like that, even people working for me. They're either repeaters or they're inventors. This advice was very valuable. After Ed Schwarz told me that, I never expected a guy who was a good repeater, a good merchandiser, to come up with a lot of brilliant ideas on merchandise. No more than I figured some guys had figured out some new type of table or chair.

Eleanor Forbes

Gump: Like Eleanor Forbes. She designed a loveseat that she only put in her own place. She was doing some designing, and working for McGuire at that time. And before she did some designing for McGuire she was doing some work for Ben Davis. She had this sort of like a couch. A daybed is what it was, and it was flat. But she had a way of doing it so there was a slight slant when you were sitting on it. See, there's no slant on that couch there. She fixed it so there was a slight slant. It was very easy to change. So it's not that flat thing which people have all over now.

I said, "Why don't you sell them on the idea?" "Oh, I don't think they'd bother with it." She was absolutely zero when it came to merchandising, but she had very good ideas. A very conscientious designer.

Riess: I thought she did all of her work for you?

Gump: No, I gave her permission to work on the side for Ben Davis, who used to be in our decorating department. He's a very fine designer. I still see him every once in a while when he happens to be here. He's up in Seattle. He came from Seattle originally.

Riess: What was Eleanor Forbes's relationship to Gump's?

Gump: In the beginning she did all kinds of painting of lampshades, under Judson Allen, who was the head designer of the European section. Because Liljestrom was the Oriental designer. Of course, each one of them said the other guy was wrong in what he was doing. They had two viewpoints.

Riess: She originally was with the European section?

Gump: Yes, in that department. But she was always nuts about, fascinated over Oriental stuff.

Riess: So what did she do after she worked for Judson Allen doing the lampshades?

Gump: She was working in the store, doing that in our studio. We had three people painting these lampshades. Now I think they're awful. Just like the old lampshades, you know, that had beads hanging around them, before-the-turn-of-the-century lampshades.

Riess: What was it about Gump's that gave her the opportunity to develop herself?

Gump: I gave her the opportunity. She did some designing for clients who came in and wanted her to design them something. And then Ben Davis who had worked with her and who left us to become head of T.A.P.P. & Company, he said--I remember, I was on my way back from New York, it was just during the end of the war--he said, "You know, I'd love to have Eleanor develop some designs for me." I said, "That sounds all right with me. She's not terribly busy now; people are not ordering a lot of special work because it's hard to get this work done anyway. It's okay with me."

So people know her, internationally. She got to know all these designers. Not all of them in the world, but she got to know quite a few.

Exclusive Relationship with Crafts Artists

Riess: Did you have a stable of designers who were turning out things exclusively for Gump's?

Gump: We backed a few craftsmen during the war and towards the end of the war. Some of them became quite famous. It wasn't our backing, it was just giving them a chance to produce, and we would sell it for them.

Riess: So they gave you things on consignment?

Gump: No, we would say, "How about doing a thing like this?" Like Merlin Hardy who did wonderful plates, imaginative plates with Chinese or Japanese actors on them, not corny. He was a very good designer. We'd put it in the catalog, "Merlin Hardy, Only at Gump's," so that people would know you can only get his things there. He did very well, I think.

And then, for instance, I found Marguerite Wildenhain through being a judge in Rochester, New York. They specialized in ceramics at a particular museum there. So they asked me to be a judge and I met a lot of these people. I would buy certain stuff or ask if they wanted to show it in my place.

Riess: Was this during the war?

Gump: It was towards the end. We can look that up exactly. That's not going to be difficult to find; I'll ask Mrs. Graham.

Are we going into crafts now?

Riess: I was asking about Eleanor Forbes and how she worked with Gump's, and I was trying to generalize from her.

Gump: No, there's a big difference with her. She was just a young girl getting out of the California School of Fine Arts and looking for a job, and she painted lampshades. She developed into the head of the decorating department. (Interior design is a better word, because decorating sounds like you use staples and put some fleur-de-lys on the walls.) She became nationally and even internationally famous.

Riess: I'd like to know the whole sort of set-up of Gump's when you were there, how many departments there were, and who was doing what, when.

Gump: I have around here a thing that I have done and gave away to people called "This is Gump's."* It tells all about the departments, who was in the departments, etc., etc. That's what you want to know. You can use that as a guide.

When we get into Eleanor, you're talking about two different things. You're talking about somebody who designed for us who also designed for outside people. Twice, I think it was, she went to design for T.A.P.P. She also did some designing for McGuire, when McGuire was just starting. She got along with Eleanor McGuire,

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*See Appendices

Gump: who's done a majority of McGuire's designing. She's a marvelous designer, and very modest. She's one of these people, she's good enough to know she doesn't have to boast.*

Isamu Noguchi

Gump: Usually when people boast they're not sure of themselves. There was one guy I remember—I'll tell you his name afterwards. It was 1954 and I was traveling with our head of the fashion department, what used to be called the Kimono Room. (When the war came along you couldn't call it "Kimono," because that's Japanese.) We were traveling and I bumped into this guy I'd known from the Islands. He said, "That's all right, but look at what I've gotten." He had bought this thing, blah, blah, boasting. "Look at me, look at me." The last guy in the world you'd think would be boasting, it was Isamu Noguchi. I guess he's the exception that proves the rule. You'd think he'd be secure within himself; he doesn't have to say how good he is, you see. Everybody knew that.

I got to know him fairly well in the Islands. Then one time when I was in New York I went to see him. He was living in Greenwich Village, MacDougal Alley. He was sort of lying in bed in his place there, indifferent over seeing me, he didn't give a damn about me. By that time he had just done the lobby of the Time-Life building--the small one in the corner of Rockefeller Center, not the big one they had later across the avenue there.

Anyway, he became quite famous. That was a marvelous design. It made sense, it was original without being crazy. That's why to me this guy is a great designer. Everything I see that is Noguchi is an honest design. I've never seen him do gimmicks. There's a gimmick designer and there's a functional designer.

Riess: You think of Noguchi as a designer. I think of Noguchi as a sculptor.

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*[Added later] I don't like the idea of Miss Forbes getting quite so much credit. The reason I say that is she was unfaithful to Gump's, not in a dishonest way, but in a subconscious way. Her work was her baby. What happened to Gump's was secondary. When we had the awful fire in 1968 she just didn't cooperate; where everybody else did their best in collaboration and it worked out very well, she did nothing except think about her own job. She was so adamant about keeping her spot, and I resented that, particularly because I helped build her up in the first place.

Gump: Well, sure, he's both. Paul Manship is definitely a sculptor; I don't think he ever did anything for interiors.

Riess: I didn't know about Noguchi's doing things for interiors other than lamps.

Gump: Well, he's done all kinds of things. But he used that sort of undulating form on the ceiling of the Time-Life building. I remember seeing it and it was terrific. Then I found out that he had done it. Well, I'm talking about one thing that I know that expresses more what I admire. An individual with imagination.

Riess: You carried Noguchi's lamps in the store, didn't you?

Gump: I guess so. I don't remember.

Riess: Did you carry any other Noguchi things?

Gump: We may have. I couldn't answer that. I don't think we ever had a show of his at the store, as far as that goes. He had things shown at the Museum of Modern Art, naturally.

Riess: I wondered if you started having his lamps in the store when he was relatively undiscovered.

Gump: Could be. It could have been in the thirties, between 1932 and 1938, when I wasn't in the store.

Riess: So Noguchi in the store wasn't your discovery?

Gump: No, I knew him in the Islands, through a mutual friend. This guy was a very good designer, too, this fellow who introduced me to Noguchi.

Gimmicks

Gump: What drives me crazy--there was one guy, a designer who married into the Montgomery Ward family. He was doing some designing for them and he had to make a water pitcher. It was on an angle--I'd give you a sketch, but that won't be any good for the book--it just was on an angle. And that was gimmicky, it was different, see. Why turn the pitcher so it sloped? It made the water come out quicker? I don't know, it's been able to come out for quite a few millennia, I think, without changing the angle. No, it's like he tipped the glass and got it hot and pushed it so it bent over. But there's no point in that. That's what I call gimmicky.

Gump: Frank Lloyd Wright did some gimmicks, too. He's a lousy furniture designer, and I told him so.

Riess: Did you carry any of his furniture?

Gump: No, nobody did. He usually designed the stuff for the houses he had built. Did I tell you the famous Frank Lloyd Wright story? This guy asked Frank Lloyd Wright to do him a house. So Wright did the whole thing the way he wanted. The brother of the owner of the house came in and he said, "Well geez, this looks very nice. I didn't recognize Frank Lloyd Wright in all of the design and everything. It's wonderful. How does it work?" The owner said, "Well, it works fine, except there's one place where all the alleys up in the roof come together and the water leaks through right in the center of the living room. We can't figure out how to fix it." The brother of the owner said, "Well, I'll tell you what's wrong, that's what you get for putting a work of art out in the rain." [chuckles]

Well, it's always good when somebody tells some crazy story! For instance, getting back on the Jewish subject, this fellow who's quite a merchant and everything else, an entrepreneur, a very brilliant guy, he even passed an ex for getting into Annapolis just because he wanted to prove he didn't need the college board, he would pass it. He studied like hell and his father said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I'm going to Annapolis." And his father said, "Well, you have to go two more years. You've only been in high school two years." He said, "No, I've already passed the exes!" His father didn't even know he was working on that.

But the reason I'm mentioning him is that my brother and he were quite friendly, and he said, "For god's sake, how is it you're always talking about this Jewish business when I'm talking to you. Dick never talks about being Jewish." And my brother says, "He doesn't know he's Jewish." [chuckles] He said it as a wisecrack; rather than say, "He doesn't think he is," he would say, "He doesn't know he's Jewish. So why would he talk about it."

The reason I bring that up is because there can be some funny stories about people, and that's a good one. Of course, when I'm lecturing the public I don't bring up the problem of my inheritage. Should it be inheritage or heritage?

The Discovery Shop

Riess: I want to pick up another loose end that you mentioned earlier. You said that your father had a lot of doubts about the Mexican venture.

Gump: Well, no, people threw doubts in his ear, or mine, whatever you want to call it, because they were so afraid that I was going to be head of the company someday if my stuff got any recognition. And it was damned good. I hired a woman who knew all about planning and arranging tables and all that stuff. She did very well. We had a show of these tables in the Discovery Shop, which is what we called that section. It's a good name, I think.

Riess: It is. That was your baby? When you came back to the store in 1941?

Gump: No, I got most of my stuff for the Discovery Shop on my first trip down to Mexico.

It was 1942 and I remember the date because I was in a town that was right between Mexico City and Puebla. There was a big parade and I said to the fellow driving the car, "What's this big parade about?" He said, "We just declared war on Germany." That was the middle of May of '42. It took them almost six months after Pearl Harbor to decide the Germans were their enemy. Although the Germans had a pretty strong guy in the Mexican government.

We did a lot of glass then too. I must tell you a funny story about the glass. When I bumped into this fellow I was telling you about [p. 86] who used the same stuff from Toluca, the matting, he said, "I've got glassware to go with the yellow, but that darned yellow, I can't get the material, it's forbidden." I said, "Okay, then forget the yellow glass." "It's beautiful-looking," he said, "It's terrific, going with the yellow mats. But I can't get it." We found out after the war that the basic color in the glass was uranium. Uranium 235 or something like that. And, of course, it was tied up, they didn't want anybody to send uranium down to Mexico. Nobody knew what it was about. He didn't know what it was about; I didn't know what it was about. I said, "Oh, it's some stupid rule that you can't. They won't send that to Mexico for their color."

Riess: That's interesting.

Gump: Yes, it's a very interesting story. But we finally did and if you see the brilliant yellow in Mexican glass, you'll know that it might have been a bomb. A good title for a chapter. [laughter]

Riess: Yes, "Might Have Been a Bomb."

Gump: But some of the other stuff that I designed really bombed!

Riess: When you had the concept of the Discovery Shop did you have to clear away a whole other department?

Gump: One section we cleared out. One of the assistant buyers thought he was going to get it, but I said, "He doesn't know what he wants to do with it, but I know what I'd like to do with it. I'd like to put this Mexican stuff in there." So we made it look like a big tent.

Riess: Did people see it first off when they came into the store?

Gump: Oh, no, it couldn't be. It was up on what we call our second floor, but in those days we called it the mezzanine. I decided to change that name.

On the Mezzanine

Gump: My father was worried to death when the china and glass were moved up there. And there was a lot of traffic that used to go in there. I figured out--I didn't know these words, but I found out it wasn't impulse buying for china and glass. You come in for that. And the same thing with silver, particularly. I would say that 50 percent of our sales were bridal gifts and stuff like that. So it's not an impulse thing. I would show them a certain pattern, that may be an impulse, but they go in there. "Where is the china? It used to be on the first floor." My father was worried to death about moving it up. He kept asking his secretary, because he couldn't see very well, where it was.

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Gump: The Silver Department wouldn't move upstairs. The guy who was in charge of that said, "The silver has to be on the main floor." I said, "You're thinking of silver in places like Peacock's of Chicago and Altman's, where it is associated with jewelry. But it isn't with us." He had this enormous section on the main floor and we moved it upstairs where there was more room and more coordination with china and glass, which naturally goes on the table.

He had worked for us for years but I had to let him go in the middle fifties. He had written a letter to a manufacturer saying, "Mr. Gump believes in that but I'm sorry, I don't agree with him." I had a copy of the letter. I said, "Did you write this?" He and I had been very friendly for years. I traveled with him. In fact, he took a special trip down to Mexico in '43 to develop some stuff down there. He said, "Yes." I said, "You mean, in other words, you don't agree with me on this?" He said, "No, I don't agree with

Gump: you." I said, "Well, then, you don't work for me. You can't work for a guy that you don't believe in." I won't go into details, but he was telling a manufacturer he didn't agree with me. Well, that's an awful thing.

Riess: It undermines the whole institution.

Gump: Well, it's bad that way, and also in the trade. He writes a letter, if I still keep him on they figure maybe he knows where the body's buried or something.

So after that we moved the silver up, all the cases and everything, and it all worked out beautifully.

Riess: And the Discovery Shop was where?

Gump: Well, there was no Discovery Shop because the Mexican thing was over. After the war there was no reason to have a Discovery Shop.

We worked on new things coming out of Europe, if possible. That's why I have this thing, this Commendatore thing [button in lapel].

Riess: So that was only about three years or so that there was something called the Discovery Shop.

Gump: Oh, less; two years.

I don't know why somebody doesn't steal that idea. I'm going to ask some top patent attorney, see how I can tie it up.

1944: Vice-President and General Manager

Riess: You went ahead with this, even though your father wasn't crazy about it. Was he drifting out of control of the store?

Gump: No. He liked anything he heard about that was very imaginative and brought people in the store. He was that type, that any new idea he'd go for.

Riess: In 1944 you were made vice-president and general manager. Did that mean that your father had finally turned things over in a major way?

Gump: Well, what happened, it's very interesting. I went to some people--as I said before, we had to make sure that I was the proper person for running the place because it was this great responsibility. So we had a meeting of seven or eight executives.

Riess: Executives of the store?

Gump: Yes. Nothing to do with Honolulu, because that was a separate entity. And what happened was that somebody brought up something, and my father said, "Well, I'll tell you, I'll decide on that when I've made up my mind." I said, "You're not deciding anything. I'm deciding. I've got the ideas, and I'll tell you what I think. Otherwise, what's going to happen when you're not around? Somebody's got to be running this place." I said, "You know darned well these experts say that I should be running the place. I'm general manager now, vice-president, whatever you want to say."

He said, "Well, I don't know." I was told later he was very pleased because I revolted, see, against the father; the old Oedipus business.

Riess: Were the rest of the executives kind of relieved that you were really taking hold, do you think?

Gump: No. They hated it, because they didn't think I knew what I was doing. They thought I was too artistic.

Riess: Was your father's policy to call weekly meetings of the heads of departments?

Gump: No, no. It was his policy to call the wrong person head of the wrong department! [laughter]

[Added later] When it was understood I was general manager with my father still president, I had a layout, plan, organization chart, or what-you-will to show divisions of authority. This was a tough task because the older generations had no concept who ran what. The result was Dad would call the wrong people to carry out an order. To get various executives to work according to my plan was very difficult. They never worked according to any plan, and the worst person to get things mixed up was my father. But this old dog eventually learned new tricks because I would stop him or the wrong person he called whenever this came to my attention. Eventually folks knew who they were and what command they rode. [End of addition]

Psychiatrist's Advice

Gump: I went to see a psychiatrist at the time I was taking over as general manager. I told him I was getting these headaches--this is a case of a psychiatrist helping--and he put on an accent and he said, "Why can't you tell your father what to do?" and banged the desk. "You have to tell him what to do." What happened was he

Gump: forced me to grow up, that's all. I took over. I know my father felt relieved. I said to him, "You have to work through me," and after that he relaxed and he wasn't such a martinet. I was told afterwards by his secretary, he was very pleased that I revolted. That psychiatrist actually changed Gump's.

Riess: Did you go to the psychiatrist because of the headaches?

Gump: Yes, because of the headaches, and I wasn't getting any place with this, that, and the other. I just felt lost. I can't remember exactly why. I was happily married at the time, I thought. It had nothing to do with my marriage. (It could have been my mother-in-law, but it wasn't that. Because the only cure for that would have been to shoot her, but I didn't want to go to San Quentin.)

Riess: Did you go through a complete analysis?

Gump: No, no, I only had six or eight visits, that's all. But he knew right away what was wrong, that I just had to revolt. My brother tried it all the time, but--well, he came back to the store from being in the army and geez, I came in the office one time and he was screaming at my father. I couldn't understand it. Here's this old man--it wasn't a question of it being your father, it was a question of this old man, and he was screaming at him. I couldn't take it; I left the office. He had no control over himself.

A. L. Gump in Retrospect

Riess: I asked you when we talked about your mother's death what you felt her influence was. What do you say about your father's influence on you, in retrospect?

Gump: Well, his influence on me was that I treated people just the opposite of the way he treated them. In other words, I didn't follow in his footsteps, from the point of view of mood or command or whatever you want to call it. My idea of commanding was to give an order clearly. Then if they didn't want to do it I'd raise hell. If they would give me a reason why it didn't work that was enough. But he just used to raise hell with people. At times I probably should have been tougher. But it was a holdover from him, knowing how people suffered when he would blow his top.

I remember one time a very prominent woman was in the decorating department. This one salesman came into the design place with tears in his eyes. He said, "Goddammit, if your father wasn't so poor-sighted I would have knocked the hell out of him," or words to that effect. I'll never forget that. The woman had a lot of money, but she was just looking for something that we didn't have.

Gump: And my father said, "You're a lousy salesman! Couldn't you sell her anything?" You know, that attitude--instead of service, it's just a question of having a person in your spiderweb. And you're not taking advantage of the fact that you've got them in your web, to get a few bucks out of them. That's putting it very crudely, but that's the way it was.

But on the other hand, he had such imagination, and he had a marvelous voice, which I've said before. I never tried to copy him. My brother went to pieces because he unfortunately tried to be another A. L. Gump, which was pretty impossible considering his individual character. Almost anybody who met him thought he had a marvelous personality. [Robert Gump resigned from the store August 31, 1948.]

Riess: It sounds like you and your father had very different attitudes about money.

Gump: Yes.

Riess: Was it the game of making every last buck?

Gump: Yes, I think that combined with something with imagination working. The bottom line business--I'm so used to that expression, the bottom line, but he really lived for the bottom line. I lived to see the thing presented--a beautiful mixed metaphor.

Riess: Well, you were interested in the means and he was interested in the end.

Gump: Yes, I could see something being developed a certain way. A lot of my things were awful flops. I think you read some of that in the book.

Riess: You said your father didn't have regular meetings with the executives at Gump's. Did you establish that?

Gump: Oh, yes, you have to. An amazing story--getting back to this particular meeting where we discussed moving the china and glass up to what we called the mezzanine, which is now the second floor. I remember he said, "Well, let's have a vote on that." We went around and everybody voted, and finally the head of the Silver Department said, "I'm for it, Mr. Gump." He said, "Okay, that makes one more. The majority wins, so we'll move it up." I said, "Well, don't worry. I've designed it so we can move it back if it doesn't work." But the last guy who said to move it was the guy I couldn't get to move until he finally left the place! I don't like to belittle the guy; he and I were very good friends. But I never heard from him.

I boast that I've always been friends with people after I've fired them except for this one guy, after I fired him. This might be valuable in there some place. When you fire somebody, you should

Gump: give a reason: they haven't carried out a policy of yours, they haven't done something you've asked them to do, something like that. I remember telling executives, I said, "Don't give an order without giving a reason." If you give an order without a reason to people, they just figure, "Well, he thinks I'm an idiot. I didn't know why he wanted such-and-such." Certain executives just can't give a reason, because they've never thought that much.

Have you read, Good Taste Costs No More? You have the book, don't you?

Riess: Yes.

Gump: In that I talk about tricks of the trade. I talk about a lot of that stuff.

Period Furniture, Sources and Profits

Gump: One thing that happened—my wife [Agnes] and I were driving through England the summer of 1954. We went to see a cousin of hers who lived in Kent. After we left her cousin's place we went to stop in an inn right near there. It was a wonderful place, and outside there was an antique shop. I looked at the prices and I said, "Geez, this isn't bad. I thought these things were much more expensive." It got me interested.

Then when the stuff came in and was on the floor Miss Forbes didn't like it. She had forgotten all about periods, although earlier she did work on period stuff, but by then she was completely modern and dedicated to Japanese or Chinese. I remember one time she said, "Look at this." It was a chair, and the arm or something had fallen off. She said, "That's a fine thing for us to sell! It's lucky I saw that." I said, "Oh, we'll fix that." Actually, I thought "Get the hell out of here if you don't like it," because we made a pile of dough on that stuff.

Some Windsor chairs, for example, that I bought originally for five or six pounds, now you can't buy the same chair for five or six hundred pounds. It's gone up so much in value. I think I mentioned getting this oak stuff, and the dealer said, "You don't want oak." Because he always associated oak with big halls.

I was told by this guy who left the store for reasons I mentioned earlier that you can't buy antique silver in England. But the pot I showed you, the one with the back handle, I'll tell you exactly what I paid for it. It was $2,800--a thousand pounds with

Gump: the pound at $2.80. I've checked around, and today it's worth at least $20,000-$25,000. It's silver. If we held those things long enough, they'd go up that much in value.

But you can't have profit unless you turn merchandise over. But that's another story, because there are two types of minds, you see. There's a mind that says you've got to have a quick turnover and we get the profit; we get the 5 percent profit, and it keeps turning over. They don't think about all the energy that goes into doing that. It's so much easier to sell one thing that you mark up five times. Maybe you've held it for two years but you've still only got one transaction to sweat over.

Riess: At Gump's you were able to manage to do both?

Gump: It was a balancing act; it was very difficult.

Riess: Would Miss Forbes have had the whole store go modern?

Gump: Not necessarily that.

I'll show you an article of mine called "Time for Taste." Did you see that one?

Riess: Yes. That was the one that was in the Retailing Home Furnishings?*

Gump: Well, you see, I was all hot for modern, too.

I'll tell you what was so bad--what was being done then by the factories--they didn't do any modern. If they did, it was crazy. You can see examples in my book. Mostly they made horrible copies of period stuff, so-called. I show some grandfather clocks that are a perfect example of some of the awful-looking things. With a little copying of antique grandfather clocks, doing them properly or simplifying a bit, they're okay. But no, they have to have these--the chimes are okay, there's nothing wrong with them, they work beautifully and all that--but awful looking!

One reason I was screaming for modern was I had no idea that antiques were so inexpensive. I thought they were terrible prices. I was thinking of 1930, just after the crash. They were high. I'll give you an example. I remember the oak court cupboards. They were early 17th century Jacobean, and properly done. When I was there in 1930 when the pound was $5, they were 300 to 500 pounds.

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*See Appendices

Gump: When I went back people were associating oak with manor houses, with beams and all that stuff. They didn't realize it looked very good in a Kennedy Cape Cod-type place. That's the advantage I had with a lot of buyers and antique dealers; I knew how to coordinate things. I don't say that boastfully; it's because I always was interested in design and having things that look well together. So I bought tons of oak. The dealers wondered why. They just hadn't thought of it. You see, colonial was going up and it was expensive as hell. It's still high.

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I know where all this stuff comes from. A good example of where they come from is Dublin, the 18th century houses. When I say 18th century I mean from the start of the classic period, of, say, 1750 to about the end of the Regency, 1820. That whole period. Figure about four or five square miles of houses all done in the same period. You can go there and see them all, they haven't changed. Some of them are dives now, with these wonderful Adam entrances, all filthy and dirty and ugly. Because they were all done at the same time. Let's put the estimate low, let's say there are at least twenty of those houses to a block, whatever a block usually is. You have to imagine size. Say a block of 100 x 100 yards, something like that. I don't know. That's the way Dublin is; I didn't get out with a ruler and measure it.

On top of that you figure every room was done in the same period, late 18th century, early 19th--maybe a little later 19th, early Victorian--and you multiply that. And you figure in pestilence and war--so let's say you only have 10 percent left. You've got thousands and thousands of authentic pieces of furniture! And what they didn't have, they'd "marry" them, what they call "marrying" them. They'd find a base that was good and a top that fitted, and they'd put them together.

I have one piece that Paul Faria--who was a friend of mine in the decorating department, a very good designer--he pointed out to me that was a married piece. It's one of those little taborets in the room next door. So that's where a lot of these things came from.

I remember the first time I was in York there was a dealer there, he had a bunch of Staffordshire dogs. When I say a bunch, I'm talking about pairs. He must have had a hundred pairs of Staffordshire dogs, and they were about a pound to a pound and a half a pair. The whole floor was covered with these dogs. So I bought about four or five pairs of them. Of course they sold immediately! They were authentic; they came in as antique. I wish I'd bought them all!

Riess: How did you decide how much to sell them for?

Gump: Well, packing and all that is not cheap. It doubles by the time they arrive back in San Francisco. So if they were a pound a pair, with a pound being about $2.80, call it $6.00 by the time they get here. So we marked them at $20 or $25 a pair. We made four times our investment. If I had a hundred, just think of all the dough I would have made. I should have bought the whole lot, boom. But I didn't.

Riess: How do you figure out what the traffic will bear?

Gump: That's the thing. You figure out what the traffic will bear. If it's too high, then you lower it.

Return to Carcassone

[Dictated by Mr. Gump from Florence, Italy, March 1988]

Gump: I'm preparing to tell a few stories about buying antiques, and I probably should have some music in the background to give the proper atmosphere. Oh, that is an idea. I think that people, if they buy a Louis XV chair, maybe they should have some music by Lully coming out of the chair. Nobody's ever thought of that. Well, I won't do that right now; that's for the future. People learn all about music and they learn about period furniture at the same time. That would really be a new idea. Might work out well.

To prove it can be done, I'll play a simple little 18th century type of number that would go with an 18th century interior. Something like a "Minuet by Gump." It will be very short. [plays minuet on the piano]

There's your "Minuet by Gump" to go with--maybe, I guess it's probably Louis XVI furniture. [mimicking French accent] Transition between the Louis XV and Louis XVI.

I mentioned something about "transition." I have to go farther back than the transition period between Louis XVI and Louis XV, to go back to the Regence. Many people confuse Regence with regency. Regence is at the end of the time of Louis XIV, when his great-grandson, who became Louis XV, was only five years old, as I remember it. Of course he had a regency running the government at the time, and it was called "le regence" in French. And it's very often confused with the regency when George III of England became ga-ga, goofy, whatever you want to call it, around 1800. The whole time he was more or less locked up, between 1800 and 1820, was the Regency in England. But I'm going back now to the Regence in France.

I was on a trip buying antique furniture and I was in the great city of Carcassonne, a medieval city rebuilt in the 19th century by Viollet-le-Duc, the great historian and expert on medieval modes, manners, architecture, et cetera. There were two bergeres, rather large, and a canape. Not a canape you would have with a cocktail, but a canape meaning a sort of a sofa. This was a set of three, a Regence set. "Oh," I thought, "that's very nice." And I bought that. That was in the year 1930.

I didn't go to Carcassonne for twenty-nine years. But in 1959 I went back to the same antique place, right in the middle of the great walled city of Carcassonne in southern France, and there was an older lady there. And I said to her, "You know, I was here back in 1930. There was a young girl, she must have been around eight or nine years old. Where is she now?" This lady says to me, "I'm the young girl you're talking about." And more amazing is the fact that she looked at my card and said, "Oh yes, I remember you now. That was right, that was 1930. You bought two little armchairs, heavy stuffed armchairs, and a couch; Regence." Imagine that! A memory like that! Twenty-nine years later, after having been all through the Second World War and the whole business.

Fakes

Talking about Louis XIV and Louis XV, some people listen to those names and they think I'm talking about some bellboy in a hotel in New York or something. But Regence is early 18th century. And in the 18th century, we'll jump across their channel and tell a very interesting story about some English chairs.

It happened to be that two very good friends of mine who were English, and I, we spent quite a lot of time in Paris. One of these fellows had a beautiful Chippendale-type chair, absolutely authentic, 18th century. This other Englishman and I knew that there was a fake-maker in France who could copy anything. Well, this friend of ours was ill, was at home, so I said to Arthur Tite, this friend of mine who was there, "What do you say we make a set of chairs like the one he has?"

Well, to make this story as short as possible, this fake-maker made the four chairs. And it wasn't easy because it was saddle seats, an English type of leather, English finishing, it wasn't French. He was a famous French fake-maker; in fact, world famous. When they arrived in our office, the five chairs, I said to this friend of mine, Arthur, "My god, how are we going to know which is his?!" He and I, as well as the Douzieme Bureau or Scotland Yard or

whatever you wished to call it, examined those chairs to see if there was any way we could find out which was fake or which was the real thing. We were in an awful sweat.

When Roddy Waugh, our friend, the owner of the one chair, came back from his illness he said, "Oh, what did you do here?" We said, "Well, we thought it was such a beautiful model we thought we'd make a set of four chairs to go around a bridge table," or something like that. He said, "Well, that's just great. Now what?" So we didn't know what to do. He said, "Well, let me see if I can find what the original was." I said, "I doubt if you'll be able to find it, because we inspected very closely." He said, "I remember one mark my uncle put underneath a certain spot on the original chair. I'll look to see if I can find it." Then we went through the five chairs and he did find the one original.

That shows you how you can be fooled. This was fooling myself, and I was pretty good at that time on antiques. And pretty good at that time also was my friend who was brought up with antiques. He was a relative of one of the Rothschilds. So you see, even the best of them can be fooled on mid-18th century England.

Many private collectors and dealers in antiques, they're looking all over the place for something that they can make a dollar or a mark or two on. But they really seldom know where these things come from. Of course, a lot of them are authentic; there's no question about that. They can't all be fakes.

There's one great story about my mother and father on their first trip to Europe together in 1912, I think it was. My father had heard about a French porcelain maker who made wonderful copies of Oriental porcelain, particularly of the 18th century and what they called the "Five-color pieces." Famille vert. And my father said, "Oh, I hear that these are wonderful. Let me see." The porcelain maker said [mimicking French accent], "I have fooled everybody there is. Everybody has been fooled by these copies." And my father said, "Well, that's fine. Let me see if I can tell the difference. I'll tell you what would be fair. I notice you have a big table here in this room. Why not take some of your real stuff and some of your copies and put them all out on the table there and see if I can tell the difference."

That would be fair," he said, "I will bet you cent Louis d'or." A hundred Louis d'or.

My father said, "No, I won't bet you. But let's just see."

All right. So they didn't bet. I understand--my mother told me this story. There must have been at least twenty pieces put out, of that period. That means late 17th century, like K'ang Hsi and

18th century, Ch'ien Lung, et cetera, were put out there. (And that's before there was this big fashion about tomb figures!) So this manufacturer said, "Let's see what you can do, Monsieur Gump." My father went right through saying, "This is a fake, this is an imitation, this is a fake." The man almost fainted on the floor, literally. He said, "I don't understand. You are the first person to tell the difference. What is it?" My father said, "Well, maybe I shouldn't tell you how I can tell the difference." "Well, I would appreciate you telling me."

What he did, my father had such a great sense of touch, and his sight being so poor, he was able to tell by the weight. And ever after that, I think the man who made those fooled everybody, including my father.

This next story I'm going to tell is interesting because it contains advice that I gave before to buyers about seek things out, look for them. Look for them until you find out or don't find out. But at least don't always go the easy roads. That way you get more exclusive things, and more interesting. (See p. 124)

One year in the late twenties when I came here to Florence on a buying trip I noticed an awful lot of furniture suddenly showing up at this antique dealer's place. It was sort of burled walnut, whatever you call it, and it seemed to be all over, at quite a few of the dealers. I bought a few pieces because they were very nice-looking, but I told my agent, who was like a detective, a soothsayer, I said, "We'd better find out what this is all about. All this type of furniture can't suddenly show up that never existed before in the antique shops."

Well, to make this story short, he said, "I think I've found out where it was made." I said, "You found out where it's made?" "Yes." "You mean, they're fake?" "I think these are fake." What happened was, we found the source, and it was in the middle of an orchard south of Verona. You would never in a hundred years ever know that those fakes were made in that area. You could not. We drove by this place three times and we finally pinpointed it, took a dirty little road, and arrived at this place where they made all this burl furniture. And of course it was good-looking. There's still a lot of it around. Stands up rather well. Pretty good copy of northern Italian, 18th century particularly, Baroque, you might call it, or of that type.

It was amazing, we found it. The only thing, I suddenly said to him, "Hey, wait a minute! I think I see the top of a church steeple way back there in the middle of that orchard." So we turned down and it was there. Maybe the church was put in there for the people who did these terrible things against the public. [laughs] They could go to church and ask forgiveness for their sins; I don't

know. It was very deceptive. But it was an example of how you have to seek things out. It took us at least two hours to find this place in the middle of an orchard.

Here in Florence--and I say here in Florence because I'm telling this story in my studio in Florence--the Via de Fossi is a very well-known street because they've got a great many antique dealers along that street, and a lot of very fine stuff. There's one guy in there who made it a point to have his place look like a mess. Old newspapers, cartons, old junk around. Then the people will go in there and say, "Oh, look, look, look what I've found. Maybe he doesn't know what he's got. I'll ask him."

"Where do these come from?"

"I don't know. An old lady, she bring in and she asks me, I give her some money. I keep it." Of course the buyer, whoever it is, or the collector, thinks he found a piece of Waterford, thinks "Well, I'll buy this one."

"The same lady, she bring in other pieces. Waterford? I don't know if you call it 'Waterford.' The only Ford I know is the automobile. I don't know 'Waterford.' She's bringing that."

So this fellow had this old Waterford packed away in junk and everything. You would never think it was anything, the place was such a mess. He also had other things, like Capodimonte, and all kinds of things.

The thing about that guy was, the buyers are going to "take advantage" of him because he'd sell a piece of Waterford, a Waterford candlestick, for fifty dollars, which would be cheap as dirt at that time, in the twenties. But I know where he had it made! It was made in Bohemia. He ordered all that glass made in Bohemia and got it all dirty and everything else. And one thing he was particularly anxious to get was old newspapers, as old as possible, to wrap them in.

"I have them around here since 1910, '12. I don't know. The newspapers say that, see?" Old dirt too, I guess.

But that was a wonderful example of people taking advantage of a guy, and the guy is taking advantage of the people. Cheating the cheaters.

My mother once showed me a Capodimonte box. She said, "This is actual Capodimonte." "Oh, is it?" I said. "Let me see." "Yes, the man I bought it from is very reliable. I know I can rely on him." "Is that so? I'll tell you who made it." "What do you mean, 'who made it'?"

I said, "It was made by Carl Thieme, of Pottschapel, just outside of Dresden." He made all kinds of fake porcelain. And he never used the marks that were still running. He used Rockingham because that factory was dead in the end of the 18th century. He wouldn't use anything like a Wedgwood mark. But any mark at all, and particularly Capodimonte, because that was not in use for a long time. And the box that my mother bought actually was made by him. I knew the model. So, you see.

We bought those things, but we'd sell them as new, naturally. If you get around buying that sort of stuff, then you know where it's made. But if you don't get around and find where the stuff is made, I don't see how you'll ever know the genuine from the antique. And I say that very proudly because I've had the advantage for years of being able to see where all these things are made, and fakes and everything else, and their methods of faking.

I have a little taboret in my living room. It would fool anybody in finish. I did it myself, an antique finish. One of my assistants, he and I spent a whole day antiquing this brand new oak little taboret. Now you add up our hours, how long it took us to put that patina on there, and it's cheaper to buy an antique. I figured out we must have put in $500 worth of time in making that antique. And I can show you in many other things that the real good copies of antiques take an awful lot of time.

The advantage that I had is that I found where all these things were made. My mother would say, "Here, look what I just bought in Drésden." Or, "Look what I just found in Rotterdam! Now, tell me where that was made." [laughs] Eventually she realized I could tell her where the stuff was sold as new to us, or where the stuff was made. She was always doubtful about my explanations. But it was her marvelous imagination and taste, along with Newell's, that helped build that store.

[End dictation from Florence.]

following p. 109

Richard Gump, left, and Robert Gump, right, with John and Hensleigh Wedgwood. Portrait on the wall is of Josiah Wedgwood.

Richard Gump, composing, in Honolulu, 1940.

VI GOOD TASTE

Richard Gump, Lecturer

Gump: W. Colston Leigh, my agent, says, "I hate lectures. I never go to them. All I need to know is you're a repeater, then I know that you're successful." I think that people found my lectures fascinating because I throw in a wisecrack every once in a while to wake up the old ladies that are falling asleep. And then also I gave them viewpoints from the other side of the counter.

Riess: Why did you want to do the lectures?

Gump: Damn good publicity.

I tell people, "I don't lecture, I just chat. Anywhere from 15 to 4,000, I'm still chatting. I'm not delivering a speech. For instance, the Woman's Auxiliary in St. Paul, Minnesota I had as an audience. It's supposely the largest woman's audience in the world. Over 4,000 people in an auditorium in St. Paul. The only thing I did to change was that I realized that my gestures had to be much broader from the stage. They gave me a bigger screen. I usually carry my own folding screen which is translucent. Then when I raised my arm or something like that, I made it more of an exaggerated move. I adjusted my speech and action.

"Jade, Jewels, and Junk"

Gump: I remember it was Bradley, the head of Accounts Receivable, who was there ever since he was a kid at fourteen--he finally died after working there all this life, see--after my father died he said, "You ought to get out there on the floor and meet more of the people the way your father did." And [Martin] Rosenblatt said that was so, too.

Gump: So I said, "Now look." I was in Chicago at the Twentieth Century Club, founded by Mrs. Ogden Armour. And I was surrounded by people of that ilk, by these top society women. And the fellow who helped me put up my screen for the lecture said to me--he was an Irishman--he said [imitating brogue], "You know, I'll tell you, the average income here"—and this was in 1954--"the average income of these ladies is between forty and fifty thousand dollars a year," which was quite a bit then. Here I had this audience of three hundred of those women for this glorified plug for Gump's.

My lecture was called "Jade, Jewels, & Junk." Afterwards I sat next to the president of this club, the most prominent club in Chicago, with the most prominent, wealthy people. And I said, "I hope that didn't sound too commercial." "Oh no, Mr. Gump, we enjoyed it so much. We got the view from the other side of the counter." Which is what I try to do, you see. So I gave them a history of the store that way.

I said to Bradley, this fellow I was talking about, "Look, in Chicago I spoke to three hundred of the most important women in Chicago in one fell swoop. My father, if he lived to be a thousand, couldn't have covered that many people in one shot. So don't tell me I should be getting out on the floor."

Riess: It was a good piece of business to do the lectures. You weren't doing it for your own--

Gump: Ego? No. It was good business.

One time I couldn't make it. It was up in Seattle in a place where I had spoken two or three times already, the Seattle Athletic Club, where they have a big women's section. Every Saturday morning they usually have a lecture. So I said, "Well, I can't make it. Maybe Mr. Rosenblatt can." He went to Cal and I knew he had won a gold medal in debating. He had a very centurion voice; he spoke very well. I wasn't sending up some guy who didn't know how to talk.

When he came back I called them up and asked how it was. They said, "Oh, they were wonderful. He and his wife were just charming." He said, "Boy, was that a sweat. Now I know what you've gone through. I wouldn't want to do it as often as you do." He really didn't enjoy it. I enjoyed it. I wouldn't do it otherwise.

Riess: How much did those lectures increase sales?

Gump: It's impossible to say. That's a "How high is up?" sort of question. The only thing I can tell you is that in my lecture of "Jade, Jewels and Junk," which is a history of the store, I showed them a picture of the Jade Room. We had two of them. (Now they keep them both open, which is stupid as hell. I had one closed.)

Gump: And at two or three places where I was talking I said, "When you get to San Francisco be sure and ask for the Inner Jade Room. Otherwise, they won't show it to you. It's where we lead the very important people. And you're all important people, you've grown in importance because you've been listening to Richard Gump." I would go on a lot of gags like that.

I meant to go up to the Oriental Department and ask them how many people ask to go into the Jade Room. Mrs. Graham said, "Oh, that's where it came from. We were wondering about all these people who ask to see the Inner Jade Room." It showed that the traffic was built just like that. I didn't realize it was that close.*

You mentioned Stanley Marcus and his book--what the others said, "You care enough to charge the very most," that ought to be for Stanley Marcus. I've known him for years, you see, though I never got to know him very well because I never asked him for dinner here or when I was in Sausalito. He asked me how did we happen to have this book, Gump's Treasure Trade. I said, "They asked for it." And the guy he [Marcus] got to write his book asked me about it. I said, "Well, they just asked for it. That's all I can tell you." I guess it's that as a store, we're news. I don't know if we're still news.

Riess: When you wrote articles like the article in Retailing Home Furnishings in 1946, was that in response to a request that you write something?

Gump: I've forgotten how that came about. I think I met the editor and I told him, "I'd like to write a story. I know you don't care about what you print particularly."

Riess: It was a very provocative article.

Gump: Yes, it's very--what would you call it?

Riess: Iconoclastic?

Gump: Yes, exactly. I don't know what the icons were. Well, no, the guys who made these horrible copies of period stuff.

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*Between 1952 and 1965 Richard Gump gave 246 lectures. Ninety of those lectures were given in 1954 and 1955.

Marriage to Agnes

Riess: You have a nice writing style. Was it easy for you to do these pieces?

Gump: Well, my ex-wife wrote rather well, too. She and I worked together on a lot of this stuff. She was quite good. Her father, Malcolm Fraser, was a great writer too. He was the personal secretary of Mayor Rossi. He had a marvelous knowledge of everything; he was a brilliant guy.

Riess: Your wife was from San Francisco? [Agnes Marie Fraser, married in 1945.]

Gump: Yes, we were both from here.

Riess: I've been told you had a wonderful house in San Francisco.

Gump: That's probably the one in August Alley with the Tommy Church garden and everything. I put in a studio at one end. The back end--I think it was put up by a drunken sea captain, a crazy darned place. The two of us bought it as an investment. I spent quite a bit of dough to fix it up. It was a very charming place and Tommy did a wonderful job on the garden.

Riess: Where is August Alley?

Gump: Between Union and Green and Powell and Mason, a little alley there.

Riess: Did you do a lot of entertaining there?

Gump: Quite a bit, yes.

Business Friends: Sir John Wedgwood

Riess: And as a rising executive for Gump's, did you make a point of entertaining?

Gump: Yes, I did quite a bit of that. I did that over in Sausalito before we separated, too. I remember an evening with Hensleigh Wedgwood of Wedgwood pottery, and his West Coast head of sales, where he and my wife entertained each other telling dirty jokes! And I remember the executive vice-president of Phelps-Dodge, a man I met on my second lecture tour, when I was in Fort Wayne, a hell of a nice guy. He put me up in the Chicago Club one time when I was going through Chicago and couldn't find a room. It's like the Pacific Union Club here. These people, I got to know them in that way.

Riess: Did you get thrown in with a lot of people that you had to grin and bear? How compromised did you have to be in order to--

Gump: I know what you're saying. Did I have to put with a lot of people? I didn't put up with too much.

Riess: You didn't?

Gump: No, not too much. And this is a good reason to entertain somebody. The Wedgwoods I knew because I knew his cousin, Sir John, a very amusing guy. Sir John Wedgwood was one of the commandoes who went into Norway and broke up the heavy water installations that the Germans had going. They were working on the atomic bomb. He was one of the commandoes who went through there.

They were down here in April, I think, one year. They were staying at the Highland Inn in Carmel. Hensleigh wakes up and says, "God, where's John?" When John came back he said, "Where the hell have you been?" He said, "I went up to the top of the mountain and then I went down there below and went swimming." You know how rough that is? You know, along there where the Highland Inn is?

Riess: Yes! It's impossible!

Gump: He was swimming down there. He said [imitates British accent], "It's nothing for a commando. Good Lord, no." It wasn't boastful, it's just that he wanted to go for a swim and he didn't realize how treacherous that place could be. But then, he would know something about currents by looking at the water. That was so funny. Everybody asked, "Why did you go in there?" "Oh, it was wonderful. Dashed good."

Riess: Well, that sounds like one of the bonuses, meeting someone like that. But you must have met a lot of irritating, phony, terrible people.

Gump: Yes, but I tried to adjust to what people liked, and talk about baseball, talk about boxing, some broad in the corner of the restaurant, something. I can adjust to the company. I didn't do it to suffer so much. No, I didn't do that.

But it was important to--you have to realize I got to know quite a lot of designers and I enjoyed talking to them about design. I gave a couple of guys a big plug when I lectured in Aspen at one of the design conferences. That was back in '52. I was being interviewed by Retailing Home Furnishings and the woman said, "What do you mean by manufacturers with conscience? I said, "Well, I'll give you an example, Raymore & Company." They manufactured gift items, glassware, things of that kind. He, incidentally, was the guy about the uranium, you know, the yellow glass. I hadn't seen the guy for years, and I was up there in Aspen—he wasn't there—I said, "Well, he's what I call a great manufacturing merchant. He is

Gump: a good designer himself, and he is conscientious about what he gives the public, he doesn't give them just anything. I think he inherited the business—it was a lot of nothing--and then he built it up, because he's conscientious.

I gave him this long plug in Retailing Home Furnishings--he was almost bowled over. He said, "It's wonderful!" I hadn't seen the guy for maybe ten years, I bumped into him, and he said, "Geez, what a plug you gave me." I said, "I just used you as an example of what I thought was conscientious manufacturing, that's all."

N.S.I.D. Honoree##

Gump: I am one of the few people who is an honorary member of the National Society of Interior Designers. I know that the Duchess of Windsor is one of the few, also, so I am in her class. Although, thank goodness, I am able to talk better than she can right now.

Riess: When did you get elevated into that?

Gump: I know exactly when it happened. It was in 1966. I was going around the world with a buyer for the store, and his wife, and I had to leave them in Vienna. From Vienna I went up north to Scandinavia and from there went back to England. From England I flew back to San Francisco where I was being honored. They were having a national conference here. I remember that Vincent Price was the principal speaker. I had met him before, he is a very nice guy, he really knows his stuff in art because that was his major in college.

But anyway, getting back to it—I know I was one of the few at that time. I don't know how many honorary members there are now. Why I brought this up, I just got through fixing these paper flowers around this living room--anybody reading this will think, "Oh, boy, he's flipped! Paper flowers!"

Riess: Please describe this living room.

Gump: First of all, in here I've got very important Gandhara pieces. Gandhara is like the area of Afghanistan today. Kabul was the center of the Gandhara culture. The Greeks moved--a lot of people always think, "Go west, young man, go west," but the Greeks moved east. As you know, they were in Asia Minor. In fact, some of the greatest discoveries of Greek sculpture came from Asia Minor, and from the islands in the Aegean.

But the Greeks kept moving east and they ended up in what is now Afghanistan with this culture which is sort of Oriental mixed with Greek sculpture. If you'll notice, in almost all of the things

San Francisco Chronicle
May 20, 1966

'Honesty in Design'

National Honor for S. F.'s Richard Gump

By Michael Grieg

This late in life Richard Gump, San Francisco's tow-headed arbiter of taste, refuses to allow the encroachments of renown and awards to tame his irreverent opinions.

The 60-year-old merchant of elegance interrupted a round-the-world shopping spree for his Post street store to return to town yesterday to accept an honorary membership in the National Society of Interior Designers.

INTERVIEW

Gump acknowledged the august award—presented at the group's Fairmont Hotel convention—with all the vim and slapdash of the Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band he occasionally conducts.

"The only reason I can afford to stay at the Ritz is because good taste pays so well," he said during a press interview.

"Honesty in design and living, that's what I hope they're honoring. I've just tried to build a better, more elegant rat trap, that's all."

Gump, a painter, author, composer, lecturer, decorator as well as store executive and oom-pah-pah conductor, looks like an amalgam of Professor Irwin Corey and the Ancient Mariner.

RICHARD GUMP
"Good taste pays well"

Brushing flecks of cigarette ash from a magnificent silken suit, he pinned:

"Ivory league—Hong Kong copy of a Brooks Brothers. Goes well—don't you think?—with my rust suede shoes."

TAHITI

And Gump, who alternates living styles between "my Russian Hill pad and my digs in Tahiti," went on seriously:

"These are times for breaking rules, for interesting combinations that require true sophistication. A Queen Anne chest of drawers, for instance—placing it against a plain modern wall brings out its qualities far better than its original background."

Then, in a Rimbaud-Dylan Thomas let's-derange-the-senses mood, he added: "Our taste needs shaking up sometimes, a kind of adventure *into the unknown where even* a meaningful piece of junk has its place . . . along with the wares from Gump's.

"Perhaps we should experiment with cook-ins—not cook-outs. Put sand all over the living room. A barbecue in the middle of the Persian rug. Photomurals of breaking waves. Just to relieve the boredom of status quo taste."

VIEWS

Other Gump conversation pieces:

- "I abhor conversation pieces, expensive gee gaws that have no infernal use—they only lead to conversations about why they were made in the first place."
- "Every time I see an otherwise beautiful American car like the Continental I want to chop its big rear end off. The way it makes the car sway on curves, the only place to drive it is in straight-line country like Texas.

"And while we're talking about safety, I wish they'd bring back the big old-fashioned front bumper and stick the radiator in the back where it's a lot safer."

- "We have to thank God and the Government—in the Presidio and Fort Baker—for what beauty still exists on the waterfront here. We've done little ourselves compared, say, with the harbor in Sydney, Australia, where the whole thing has been landscaped to look like an English garden."

Gump: you can spot the Greek influence right away. Like in those three Buddhas over by the window; that's a good example. This set of four bodhisattvas at the other end of the room is quite rare, but I don't put them out because they're rare, they're also very good-looking. I wouldn't buy anything unless I liked it first of all by its looks.

Testing the Design Test

Gump: Everybody who comes in here--like a friend of mine I hadn't seen for quite a few years, he said, "How old is it?" I said, "How old is it? Listen, I'll show you something really old that's very rare." "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, look, this is very rare. Nobody has anything like it in the world." "What have you got there?" I said, "Never mind. It's very old and the materials are rather rare." "Well, what is it?!" "It's a rock."*

As far as I'm concerned the first thing is it has to be good-looking. I have that in my book, Good Taste Costs No More. Of course what you might think is good-looking to you personally doesn't mean it's good-looking for everybody. But generally it works out pretty much that people with so-called "good taste," which is very elusive--. I worked out a design test because I got so disappointed with people in merchandising who had big reputations and just had poor taste.

I had one girl who went east with one of my buyers. When she came back I said, "How did you happen to buy this?" She said, "Well, she said I ought to buy it." Obviously I would want to get rid of her. How could I get rid of her? There wasn't a reason because I didn't have any measuring stick to go by. So in 1952 I invented the design test. That was used by the University of California at Davis; in 1955, they started to use it. Also, General Electric used the same thing.

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*About 1946, 1947, two Chinese stone sculptures arrived at Gump's. One was antique of the period, the other was new ordered from the carver. My father priced the "antique" four times higher than the new sculpture. Both Mr. Newell and I thought the authentic old piece plain ugly and thought the new carving graceful and flowingly beautiful. My father's price was $4,500 for the old and $200 for the new. But because of beauty we marked the new one $2,700 and the old sculpture $150.

Gump: I'll tell you briefly what it is. I picked out about 200 pictures of all kinds of things, rooms, objects, old and modern. When I say "modern" I mean modern design, no period influence. All kinds of things, even lamps. And the test subjects are supposed to select and to say whether they're good or bad. I never found anybody with good taste who did badly on the test or anybody with poor taste who did well on it.

I tested it on twenty-five experts--when I say experts, people who have devoted their lives to design, people who actually are design-conscious and always were all their lives. For instance, Stanley Marcus is in there as one of the experts. He doesn't know that, but I used his opinion of these objects. I had 200 objects, and we cut them down so it had to be decisive; out of 25 objects, there had to be agreement on 16. It was cut down, finally, to 130 objects out of 200. All the rest of them weren't decisive enough.

Riess: You said you tested it on Stanley Marcus? What other people?

Gump: I had a lot of people. I had important designers who worked for Lord and Taylor in New York who actually were designing interiors and did all kinds of work of that kind, and I had important architects. I think Neutra was one of them, as I remember.

Riess: You sent it off to them?

Gump: No, I didn't send it off. I had this test with me when I went to Aspen to lecture at the International Design Conference in 1952. [Walter] Dorwin Teague, he was another one there. A very famous industrial designer. He used to do all the work for the Ford family, personally. I got to know him and Neutra when I spoke in Aspen. I tried to be very careful of what I said, and the question period was great. I told you Neutra was in the audience and he asked me some question.

Anyway, I invented this thing because I was tired of having people come in and say they're good at this, that, and the other. They may be all right in merchandising because they follow the rules of the Harvard Business School, or whatever it was. They have a good reputation as a merchandiser. Well, I wasn't looking for that. I wanted somebody who had a feel for merchandising as well as a feel for the use of things.

A lot of people would buy something and they would say, "Well, it's a good gift item." I said, "What does that mean? A gift item is something you wouldn't buy for yourself, is that it?" Therefore, I wouldn't allow that. The thing is, you've got to buy something you would want to buy for yourself. It doesn't mean that you have to have the same type of--let's say it's a 17th century Scottish

Gump: interior, to make it real complicated. You don't have to look around for everything 17th century Scottish for the rumpus room or family room.

Another thing that was very important--everybody who came to the store and asked for a job, I gave them the test. Even if it was down in the basement, no matter what the job was. I discovered two excellent people by doing that. The head of personnel pointed out to me a young man who had done awfully well on the test. I said, "Let me see him." "He's down in the basement, helping with Christmas wrapping." I wanted to see him.

Well, to make a long story short, he became one of our top buyers. He now lives in Hong Kong and is one of the experts, one of the best American designers in the Orient. Of course, it turned out that he had studied at the University of Washington. I'm sorry I can't say he studied at Cal.

Another thing that's very interesting, talking about the University of California. This fellow who worked with me, he taught psychology, I think it was, at the University of California at Davis. He told me that he had all these kids in one class--they came literally fresh off the farm into Cal, and then they took a course in home economics. In that course there was a lady--I met her--and she taught all these girls off the farm, boys too, whatever they were, how to set a table and all that, what goes well together. They took the test and he said literally, after three semesters, they all did 20 percent better. So it shows that that does rub off.

Now, the experts I used were not people who just happened to have good taste. They were people who devoted their lives to designing. But we didn't count those; we just counted, as I said, the girls off the farm. And they did 20 percent better after three semesters of her course. It worked out very well. Scientifically it was proved--it was a very useful tool for me to find out if people had any taste.

Applying the Design Test

Gump: When I first started this I had buyers in there--. Well, I kept the buyers. What are you going to do, kick them out? After they had been there two or three years, or maybe some even twenty years, I wasn't going to throw them out. But they knew from then on I was going to be awfully tough about that.

And another thing I must emphasize--of all the experts, I didn't put myself in there. Because people would say, "Oh, that's what Mr. Gump thinks. Well, sure, but I don't agree with him." It

Gump: was very funny, there was this one guy, I knew he had a wonderful ba:kground, I knew all about the guy. When he took the test he wanted to know about a lamp, what it was. This person in personnel said, "Never mind, just say whether you think it's good or bad design."

Anyway, I discovered some very good people. One time, one guy who was a buyer, he wanted a certain girl to work for him. The girl didn't do so well on the test, and he coached her to take the test again. Luckily, the head of personnel told me. I not only wouldn't allow her in the place, I wouldn't accept her, besides that, I canned him. Because that's very unfair to the other people.

Only Mrs. Graham, who as you know is still my secretary after forty-two years, only she and the head of personnel and I knew what the results of this test were. Because you couldn't have somebody who would say, "I've got better taste than you have!" So talk about merchandising--that was a tool that was very important. I never worried when people who had passed the test went on a buying trip.

There were certain people who I knew wouldn't do too well. I remember one batch of stuff that was brought out of Spain. And if this guy had done any reading about design and period stuff, which he should have done--! At that time there was a sort of a changeover from modern back into period. I've been trying to figure out why that change; I can't figure it out. But this guy went to Spain and he bought a lot of stuff. I went down to the Receiving Department, took a look at it, and I said, "Take this and throw it in the garbage. I don't want it around the place. It's bad design of Spanish iron." And I knew something about that from my first trip to Spain back in 1927. This was around 1947, I guess.

Riess: If your employees wanted to learn more, was there a store library?

Gump: Yes, we had a very big library. But not many of them went to it to study. Some of them did, but not many of them were curious enough. And it's pretty hard. They knew that I was pretty tough on period stuff because I know it pretty well. And it's not because I'm so smart, it's just because I've been around it, living in Europe and going to these various places, and it rubbed off. I've always loved design anyway, as far back as I can remember.

Matters of Taste

Riess: Are there pieces in that test that qualify as good taste that you really don't like and that I really might not like?

Gump: Oh yes, sure. Things that personally I didn't like at all, but I kept them. I couldn't go by whether I liked something. You see, I was very careful about personal likes and dislikes. With some people I was more tolerant, probably because we got along well as personalities. But that doesn't mean that they keep a job if they're absolutely rotten.

Riess: So that means that there were things that were in the store that you might not like also?

Gump: You mean personally, for my own home?

Riess: Yes, or even on an absolute basis, but you would ultimately respect someone else's decision.

Gump: Not too much, because it usually worked out that the stuff that these people selected would be what I would select.

That reminds me of being in Dublin buying silver with my silver buyer. He learned about silver and got very good at it. Of course, he had this one specialty. There was a group of 18th century chocolate pots, and I said, "Let's get that." He looked at them and he said, "Do you really mean that?" I said, "Yes." It was a lavish rococo, a type of thing of the 18th century, authentic. It wasn't something that was rehammered in the 19th century, which they did to quite a lot of silver, you know, to make it more elaborate. The taste was a little bit--fluffy is a good word, I guess.

I said, "Yes, maybe somebody in Texas will come along and buy it," proving how much I love Texas. So he said, "Okay." And the darned thing--all the other ones sold inside of three or four months, and that thing hung around the shelves there for three or four years. It just didn't sell. That "guy from Texas" didn't come in. He probably spent all his money on a heifer of some kind. [laughs]

Riess: Speaking of the guy from Texas--Stanley Marcus, in his book, talking about good taste he says, "When we employ buyers we can check their records for integrity, but we have to gamble on their taste."

Gump: Yes, but he knew about this test, and he never used it.

Riess: He didn't adapt it?

Gump: I would have been happy to let him use it.

International Design Conference in Aspen

Gump: I'll tell you where I did use that. It was a lot of fun. I had a special abbreviated list made up of things that I knew were good and bad, decisively so.* I used that when I lectured to The Fashion Group in New York on "Do Taste Makers Make Trends." [lecture to The Fashion Group, Inc., Rockefeller Plaza, Oct. 22, 1959] I was one of the principal speakers. I handed out all these lists and I had the people check it, good and bad design. They got a big kick out of it. I remember the editor of House and Garden was one of the heads of that. Anyway, we got a big laugh out of it, because I made fun of the whole thing. I didn't take it too seriously. [laughs]

General Electric used the test. Art BecVar was the head designer of major appliances, as they called it. Not dynamos, not the big industrial things, but major appliances for the home. [BecVar's title was Manager, Appearance Design, Major Appliance Division.] And quite a lot of the changes were made in refrigerators. I was an influence in that. Later G.E. wrote to thank me for my assistance. One thing, I asked them why the curved top on refrigerators, it makes a dust area, and they changed it.

And the funny thing is, Kem Weber, who was a very famous designer at the time, he knew Frank Lloyd Wright quite well, they were more or less pioneers together, somebody said to him, "That's all very well, you can do all this modern stuff, but you don't know anything about period stuff." He said, "Oh no? I'll tell you what." (He was a German with a slight accent, but he'd lived over in this country quite a while.) He said, "I'll show you." And he got two pieces of chalk and put a big piece of black paper on the wall. And he did a Louis Seize on one with the left hand and a Louis Quinze thing with the right hand and said, "Now is that enough for you?"

He said [imitating German accent], "I learned something more important than all of that. I learned about woodworking. I know which way wood's going to move. And most architects today don't know that. That's the honor that I got in Germany, to have this Master Craftsman rating." I don't know what the name is in Germany, but it's a rating in crafts that you get in Germany. You wouldn't have that in this country. In other words--"When I design something"--is what he said, "I make sure I know which way the wood's going to move." Nobody now thinks of that because they use so much plywood.

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*See Design Test in Appendices.

Gump: But getting back to him [Kem Weber], he got sore. He said, "Why do you go and give General Electric all these ideas? You should have charged at least $25,000 or $50,000. It makes it tough for us [designers]." I knew him quite well; a wonderful old guy. He lived in Santa Barbara. I met him, you see, at this design conference, the first one where I was asked to talk up there, by [Walter] Paepcke.* You know, they ran this design conference at Aspen every year since 1951.

Riess: Who sponsored it?

Gump: Paepcke, of the Container Corporation of America, very famous. He was responsible for developing the whole thing and putting in the theater.

Serifs

Gump: He had a very famous German designer [Herbert Bayer]. I bumped into this designer the next year I was up there. I said, "You know, what you used for lettering isn't good. It doesn't read well." He is very famous for this modern lettering, you might say "sans serif." A woman who was there, a teacher from a school in Denver, she found out that kids learning reading, they could read much quicker with serifs on the letters. I told that to a good friend of mine, a famous architect from Honolulu, Vladimir Ossipoff, whose daughter came to San Francisco to get married. Ossipoff went to school with the guy who was in charge of lettering, road signs, et cetera, for the State of California in Sacramento. They went to Cal together, studying architecture. I met this guy at the wedding and I told him about this serif thing. Val Ossipoff said, "Oh, my god! Did you start something! He kept writing to me all the time. I wish you hadn't bumped into him at my daughter's wedding." He tried to put over this idea of how much quicker you could read signs if they had serifs. They know that. But you see the sans serif all over.

Somebody told me that originally with the serifs carved in stone--of course, that's how we know the Roman lettering, from the triumphal arches and things of that kind--with the sun hitting it, you could read it. You see, if they didn't have that bottom on there was no way of ending the line. That's what I was told. It seems logical to me. I think it was Jim McIlhenny, he was the vice-president in charge of the merchandising end of Macmillan at the

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*In 1952 Richard Gump participated, with R. Buckminster Fuller, Alfred A. Knopf, and Walter Dorwin Teague in the Aspen program titled "Design as a Function of Management."

Gump: time, who told me about the shadows [serifs]. It seemed logical to me. That's what he learned. He was that type of intelligent, intellectual guy.

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Value of Exclusives

Gump: One time McIlhenny was yelling at me, "You're behind in sales!" (He was a believer in the old business of needling to get more sales.) I said, "Well, I'm not worrying." "How could you not be worrying?" he said, "You're behind ten percent!" I said, "In our business, maybe a couple of sales and we'll catch up." And this actually happened. There was a big sale of a very important piece of jewelry, something like $25,000 or $50,000. And also a very fine Queen Anne chocolate pot; that was another big sale, $15,000 for this. And those two sales just caught us up to the year before. So this just shows again, you can't think of turnover all the time. Whenever you buy anything that turns over very fast, then you're in the rat race.

I did my best to keep things as exclusive as possible. Not to be snooty, but just so that people would say, "Well, the only place you can get that is Gump's." We didn't go into the antiques as heavily as we used to, but at least we would have something that was exclusive, and it meant something. For instance, I think we're one of the few places that sells the top quality Crane stationery. We've done an enormous business on that. There was a little space, I think about 8' x 12' that I gave Crane for stationery. I said, "I don't even know if it belongs in our place." They said, "Give us a chance." Well, to make a long story as long as possible, and also as large as possible, they moved from that space to a hundred times the space. When it has Gump's imprint on the envelope, it definitely has a snob quality.

Riess: Did you design the Gump's lettering?

Gump: The logo? No, it was done when I came back from Honolulu. That stationery grew into an enormous business. And I'll tell you why. Shreve's was not handling it; they used to have their stuff. And Magnin's was not even bothering with Crane; they had Crane, and they decided they would go in for the cheaper type of stuff, you know, specials and all that. That may be all right in their business, I don't know. I'm not trying to say how they should run their business, because I would hate to be given that job.

following p. 123

Richard B. Gump, 1961. Portrait by Hartsook.

VII GOOD BUSINESS

"Neglect Nothing"

[Dictated by Mr. Gump from Florence, Italy, March 1988.]

Now to go on to another phase of my world of buying and the adventures of the art mart, as you might call it. In the early days, as I said, I traveled with Stanley Corcoran in Europe. He was a European buyer and I was living over there, so I went with him. He told me something very interesting. He said that whenever you hear about something, just go and see it. If you can't use it, just forget about it. Because if you don't go and see that thing you'll always wonder what was there. "We should have gone there." In other words, it's good to know what you don't want as well as what you do want, if you're going to go out on a buying trip. Neglect nothing. Always look for something.

I think the best buy I ever made in my life was when I was going to see some pottery in Japan. The pottery was okay, modern Japanese pottery, but it wasn't anything remarkable. Leaving this place I saw some teapots being made in the terracotta color. I'm sure that everybody reading this thing would know what I'm talking about. Well, of course, in these teapots they put designs. I said, "Remove the designs"--the same as in many other things--"and we'll buy the teapots the way they are." Well, we must have sold half a million of those things, and I wasn't even looking for anything like that. I was looking for something else. So you never can tell what you're going to run into when you're out on a buying trip. Of course, that has nothing to do with how you promote it; that's something else.

Another item I bought once with one of my buyers, Bob Sheldon, we sold something like 5,000 of them. It was the shell dip bowl when they first came in. About ten years later he said, "Let's try it again and see how it will do." We didn't buy 5,000, I think we bought about 200 just to try them again, and the funny thing is, they didn't sell the second time. So you never know what's going to

happen when you're out buying. And I'm not talking about design. I'm talking about buying and selling. As far as design goes, I try to be as conscientious as possible, so that things fit in certain types of homes.

Three Phases of Successful Buying

There are three phases to buying that are rather difficult. But if all three work you have success. I'm just talking about buying now. Number one is you find a good agent. In other words, somebody in a foreign country who's honest and not trying to get a rake-off on everything that he handles. So that's the agent. And then there are the packers. The agents don't handle the packing; they turn the work over to packers. Sometimes that can be very expensive, though it doesn't have to be, or it can be very cheap, but then you get bad packing and half the goods come in badly.

The third phase is the shipping. How is this stuff shipped? I'll give you an example of my experiences in India. For a time India did not want to export. That was quite a while ago; in fact 1953, I think, is when I'm talking about. I don't know the exact technicality. They didn't want any cotton to go out of India. They wanted to do their own printing. The East India Company that started out sending the raw cotton to Lancashire--it was all printed in England and then sent all over the world, it was a great thing for the British empire--now they didn't want the cotton to go out, or any material of that kind.

I bought some table mats and things like that in India. At first my agent there said, "Well, we'll send them out through Bombay." (It came originally from around Delhi or New Delhi.) So it was either to go by Bombay--that would be towards the west, going around that way--or go out through Calcutta, going towards the east, which is as broad as it's long. What happened was the whole batch was sent to Calcutta the first time. They said, "You can't export this stuff." So it was sent back to our agent in Delhi where I bought the things, or near Delhi, craftsmen around there. Then we sent them to Bombay. They finally left Bombay, but it took over a year for that merchandise to get to our place.

One nearly unbelievable story--two years after the last world war, we got a delivery out of the post office from Shanghai of some after-dinner Soochow jade coffee cups. They were just kept there automatically until the war was over, and then they were delivered to us. Just a dozen arrived, and a rather well-known lady picked up the dozen: Eleanor Roosevelt.

It's not such a simple thing to just walk into a little shop and say, "Oh, isn't that nice? Let's get a hundred of those. I think they're very cute and they'd look very nice in somebody's hunting lodge or somebody's bathroom," whatever you want to call it, whatever the particular product happened to be for. The delivery is a very difficult thing.

Importance of the Agent

Having a good agent can be essential, and I should say more about that. The best agent I think we ever had was the one we had in Austria. He was excellent. He watched everything, had his eyes open to everything. We had a lot of good ones, it's not as if we didn't. If they weren't good we wouldn't have them. For instance, the ones we had in Hong Kong since almost the turn of the century, Deacon and Company, Ltd., they were excellent. Of course, more as a favor to us they'd handle the small little things that Gump's had because they were enormous importers and exporters of great masses of stuff. They would contract for making maybe half a million pairs of gloves to go out throughout the world. Or all kinds of things of that type. When it came to handling our type of goods, in which we wanted to be rather fussy and have it done correctly, they were very conscientious. An English background and Chinese help, the combination worked out rather well. They seemed to have an attitude of conscientiousness towards the name "Gump's." But that's one agent.

We had an excellent agent in Italy for years. We had an excellent agent up in Denmark for a while. Then he got mad at us because--this is a rather silly story. A Japanese designer of pianos went up there to see some of the modern Danish design of furniture and adapt that to--I think it was the Yamaha piano, I'm not sure, but we could check that out. But he got furious because I had that guy go up there and copy the Danish type of design to be done in Japan. That's another thing we have to watch out for in buying abroad.

All these pretty little things that come into Gump's or these very adventurous things that come in--like the great stone carvings that are in front of the museum up in Seattle, those were never even unpacked. Dr. [Richard E.] Fuller bought those just by the pictures. So there are many, many ways that these things come in. It's not like some of these big trade fairs where you say, "I'll have a dozen of those. Get me three dozen of these and four dozen of those." Yes, you can do that. But it won't be very original because they'll be bought by many other stores. We tried as much as possible in our past to invent new ideas, to keep out of the rat race.

"Promote Most What Sells Best"

In doing new ideas we found out something very fascinating. You don't just go and buy a whole bunch of stuff. You test it out at first. And as it moves, then you buy more and more. You just don't buy a hundred and say, "That ought to do well." It's the thing that Amos Parrish taught us. And I found another thing: they also told us, don't carry too many different lines. In china for instance--I'm not talking about the country, I'm talking about chinaware for the table--they said, now look, you have maybe thirty different makers of china, and 80 percent of your business is with about three or four different manufacturers. Why bother with all the others? Experiment with the others. If they do well, then okay, build them up. If they don't, cut them out. But don't buy the same amounts in the china itself. You test it out.

One of the prime things in buying is, promote most which sells best. And I should add, if we're talking about promote most which sells best, that we must remember the principle which I set up. There's a lot of stuff that we could have sold awfully well, but it would be awful-looking stuff that I wouldn't want to have in the store. So it should apply to our policy of good design and use.

When I'm talking about use, then we get in a long philosophical argument about, is a decorative thing useful? Well yes, an umbrella could be just a plain umbrella; that's useful. Or you could get a very beautiful elaborate umbrella made up in Kashmir or in Thailand or someplace like that. When I meant use, I meant--there are lots of times things are made but they don't know exactly what they're going to be used for. That's why I say to make sure about having things of use. [End of dictation]

Presenting the Merchandise

Gump: In 1968 Dayton's was interested in buying the store.* They heard that it was on the market—I didn't put an ad in the paper, "Would like to sell old store," or something like that, but Dayton knew that I was interested in selling. I wouldn't sell to them, however,

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*In early 1968 Mr. Gump wrote Dayton's--then known as Dayton's; they bought Hudson later--from the South Seas and told them he was sorry it didn't work out for them to buy the store. The letter of intent to buy Gump's was written later in 1968 between Gump's and Crowell, Collier & Macmillan, Inc., by 1973 known as Macmillan, Inc.

Gump: because they wanted to put in branches, which, of course, the later management, Macmillan, decided to do after I left and after certain restrictions expired. But I said to Dayton's, "No, you'd lose the whole atmosphere." Dayton's must have felt the Gump's name on branches would be good, but I didn't agree. It is too difficult to duplicate in branches the esprit which we had in the main store, and too difficult to supply enough exclusive creative merchandise which the store name represented.

The funny thing about this merchandising field. You'll get guys who are probably good at selling Buicks. "He knows how to sell; he knows the public." I hate that expression. Usually through those marketing surveys, "He knows the public." He couldn't figure out himself; how could he? Then they say, "Well, if he can sell Buicks, maybe he can sell dinnerware." [laughter] There's this funny idea that if you're good at one kind of merchandising, you're good at any. And it's a lot of nonsense.

The person who's qualified for one thing is not qualified for the other. I got in a big argument with the guy who became head of merchandising for the White House, a very nice guy, he belonged to the Bohemian Club, a musician. One time we were sitting around at one of these meetings, and I knew he played the viola, so I wrote out something for the viola or tenor clef. I said, "Do you recognize this?" He said, "Oh, that's Beethoven's Fifth. What are you doing that for?" I said, "Cause this is a bore, this meeting."

Anyway, to get back to it, he said, "Come up to our gift department in our store," which was the White House. (I remember as a kid I used to look forward to the White House delivery wagon coming by. I was hoping there was something for me, like some more lead soldiers for the First World War. My brother and I were building quite an army. I think President Reagan has forgotten his lead soldiers; he's still buying lead soldiers and using them. But we won't go into those politics, because I could rave for three hours on that. I don't think he actually realizes the difference between the cost of a $1 billion flattop that with one single mine could blow to hell, when that same amount of money could feed an awful lot of people in the South. What are you protecting?)

But to get back to it, this fellow said, "I wish you'd come up and tell me what's wrong." So I looked around and I said, "I know what's wrong with this department, why it doesn't sell." He said, "We'll pay you $25,000 or $50,000 a year." I said, "You offer me $50,000 a year to take a million dollars of business away from Gump's? What, are you crazy? You could offer me a quarter of a million and I wouldn't take the job. I know exactly what's wrong."

It was very simple. It's the same thing I told Joyce Hall of Hallmark Cards. They had this retail store to test the public. Joyce Hall, a marvelous guy who started the whole business—I've met

Gump: his whole family, they're wonderful people, in Kansas City--I went in and they said, "What's wrong?" I said, "I know what's wrong with this. You've just got stuff out on the table and there's no coordination with the stuff, what goes with what."

When "Emily Jones," to make up a name, goes in and selects something, she doesn't know the difference. If the things are shown properly together it gives you a lift, and you say, "Gee, I'd like to have that with that." But if it's just piled up like a bunch of stuff--it would be just like somebody in the automobile parts business, and they have all the parts for a Buick mixed up with the Ford parts and everything else, and how are you going to fix your carburetor? Gee, you've got to look through the bins for a year-and-a-half until you find the right one.

If things are coordinated properly, one thing goes with another. I'm not saying it's got to be perfect. Maybe sometimes tables were done in the store that I didn't particularly like, but they had good taste from the viewpoint of the guy. At least they were imaginative, and inspiring to the average person. And that helps sales.

It's very simple. I'm very mercenary when it comes to ideals and aesthetics. The dollar sign is the most important aesthetic thing. Somebody once said, "What thing to you is the most beautiful thing in the store?" I said, "I'll show it to you." There was a tag on a piece of ancient Japanese sculpture, I think it was $15,000. I said, "If I see a Sold tag on this $15,000 sale then that's the most beautiful thing I know."

Riess: That doesn't sound like you.

Gump: No, wait a minute. Don't say it isn't I; it is. I'll tell you why, because that was my job. I wasn't buying stuff for myself. I was buying for the public. And if I'm going to buy for the public, the sales are most important. You can have lousy sales or good sales, and I found it worked.

The Urge to Collect

Riess: Did you care who bought the things? Were you happier when a piece went off with someone who had some appreciation?

Gump: We sold one of the most important jade things we had. Fortunately it went to a place where the guy has a great appreciation for hard stones. He started as a pebble collector and then started in collecting all these stones. He has a whole new workshop for

Gump: amateurs outside of Chicago. A very charming guy. He is extremely wealthy because he controls how all the water moves around Chicago, that whole area.

Riess: Oh, how does he do that?

Gump: How does he do it? I don't know. With pumps. I mean, if I knew how, I'd do it here. I'd go up to Sacramento and tell them how to straighten out this water problem they're having. Or go to my urologist, I don't know which.

But no, I'm not being a smart-ass. Look, if you have two things for sale, I'd much rather see the $15,000 thing sold than the $5,000 thing if they're both good-looking.

[Added later] I wonder what urges people to collect. In the March '85 issue of Apollo I found an interesting story about a certain Mr. Stephenson who worked at the British Museum. We know that Napoleon "captured," advisedly, many great works for Paris, now in the Louvre. Did he want this to show his conquests or the superiority of the French, or was it enjoyment of past concepts? Sometimes I look at some of my possessions and become confused whether I own them as ego-builders or for the true enjoyment of what was important to the past. Certainly the Romans followed the Greeks for practical reasons besides inventing the keystone of the arch. Today I am going to the Duomo to study how Brunelleschi put up that great dome without a scaffold. I've read the story by Vasari; it still seems impossible, but honest causes make honest designs.

Perhaps collectors were fascinated by the craft of the past. When one examines a Japanese print, one cannot help but wonder at the coordination of the many different people who assembled the print. One artist made the original design, but at least three did the final print. Or look at the various states of Rembrandt prints. This fascination with the craft of something like Brunelleschi's dome causes curiosity and interest, desire for possession and collecting. The little silver gondola from Venice exemplifies another reason for desire for possession. It is wanted, not for its beauty, but for an emotion-memento of a Grand Canal tryst. [End of addition]

We got a very important Japanese sculpture from a collection in Japan. We read in a book about this collection. This one figure I think was 14th or 15th century, a marvelous sculpture, and we got that and sold it by telephone.

Gump: The buyer came into the store a month or two later and I told him that the Metropolitan would be interested in buying that very important Japanese sculpture but at the time they weren't open for buying anything. The head of that department at the Metropolitan at the time had said, "Oh, that's very important. We can't get it, but let me know if it ever goes anyplace." This collector said, "You tell him any time he wants a loan of that for any reason I'll be happy to loan it to him."

Authentication

Riess: Would it always be most gratifying to you if a museum made the purchase?

Gump: Yes, of course. One thing I bought--a fellow came in with some so-called Limoges enamels. Not the latest stuff, but the medieval stuff. I had somebody bring it out to show it to Walter Heil, who was the head of the deYoung Museum then. He said, "I can't tell you whether it's right or wrong." But in the meantime I found out that you can connect to the phone conversation. (I found out afterwards that was illegal.) So I had him telling me by phone exactly which was the right one and which was the wrong one. One piece out of five was excellent. He told me, "That one is very good, that crucifix." So I got that.

Then Richard Fuller who owned the Seattle Art Museum, he's a good client of ours, he bought a lot of Oriental stuff from us. The enormous Ming figures in front of the museum there, he got from us.

I said to Fuller, "Well, Walter Heil said this was a top piece." Heil happened to be an expert on medieval, particularly Limoges enamel. So Richard Fuller bought it right away. I told the fellow I bought it from, "If it's authentic, I'll give you so much, whether it's correct or not." I didn't know if it was correct. I

Gump: said, "We wouldn't want the three or four other things at any price, because they're not authentic." They were very good copies, but we couldn't sell that sort of thing. But I said, "Anything that's authentic I'll give you $500 for."

That was all right by him. I said, "Now, people get annoyed when they hear what something sold for afterwards. You've accepted that price. It's not that I'm trying to lower the price or trying to raise the price, it wasn't bargaining. You've accepted it." Afterwards I told him, "You know, our price was $3,000 for that crucifix. We gave Mr. Fuller a discount." I've forgotten what discount he got, a museum discount. With certain cases in certain places, we gave certain discounts. And we sold him quite a lot of Oriental stuff. So I think it was 15 percent off that.

I saw the fellow again. He brought in some ivories later. He was a very nice, well-educated fellow of French descent. His mother was French and he was selling a few things he had. And I said, "Oh, incidentally, you can see that cross up in Seattle now." He said, "That's wonderful." I said, "I will admit, I made quite a lot of money on it." But that doesn't happen all the time. You have to be choosey, which I was.

What I'm trying to explain is our particular type of business and its relationship to the aesthetic world, what is good and bad in design, etc., and the value of that.

Retail Merchants Association, and Unions

Riess: You've alluded to fellow San Francisco merchants. You talked about talking to the person from the White House or the Emporium at one of those meetings. What kind of meetings do you all go to?

Gump: Oh, that was the Retail Merchants' Association. It was one that was organized so that we could work together in dealing with the unions. We wouldn't deal with them independently. We were very strong until what happened was that Macy's being out here and then having the union thing in New York—they'd give in to something in New York and then that would affect them here. That wrecked the whole thing. You can't blame them, the guy who's in charge here has to go by New York. And that screwed up the whole strength we had.

Riess: Was Cyril Magnin the big power in merchandising here?

Gump: Well, he had good p.r. and he had a sixth sense, like a lot of movie producers, like Sam Goldwyn. Nobody knows how Sam Goldwyn had a sixth sense about picking out things that worked very well. I'm not putting Cyril in the same class as Sam Goldwyn, that has nothing to

Gump: do with it, but the point is, there are certain people--for instance, he [Magnin] discovered Larsen and another girl who did these wonderful ads they had showing different style. He just picked them.*

Joan, my girlfriend, one time asked Cyril--he was having dinner with us--how he happened to, and he said, "I just liked the look of their drawings, and I just thought they'd be very good." That's how good he was. He just had a sixth sense. And he also had very good public relations. Whatever he did, it worked out well. Everybody knew about it. So he became Mr. San Francisco.

Riess: When the Retail Merchants' Association got together, was his the biggest voice, the most important voice?

Gump: Not necessarily, no. It could be from Roos Brothers, it could be from Dohrmann's, it could be from any company, the White House. Ernie Molloy, he was president of Macy's. Ernie Molloy went to Harvard Business School, and he was evidently quite good at handling unions, the give and take business. I couldn't do that, I wouldn't even try. I'm glad there was somebody who could be a voice for us.

I remember one time that there was a problem with our Shipping Department. This guy, a head of one of the unions, called me up and said, "Your father would never treat us like that. You don't care about the unions, you don't give a damn." I said, "That's interesting to know. I only belong to two unions myself. What the hell are you talking about?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I belong to the Musicians Union and I belong to the Radio Artists Union. I belong to both of them."

I was very happy to belong to a union because it was very good for me. At first I would have people coming in the store and saying, "We have a ladies' club down in Merced, and we'd love to have you give your lecture. We understand it's very interesting, very amusing, based on your book, Good Taste Costs No More. Would you like to do that, Mr. Gump?" I would say, "I'll let you know." Then I would look it up to see if it's a pretty good account. I can't be very nasty and say, "No, I won't do it," like I don't have the time or something. Then I would have to give in and give a lecture for nothing.

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*Clariece Graham adds: Betty Brader was responsible for the style of Joseph Magnin's ads, followed by Marget Larsen, designer, who used to work at the White House [department store] and she copied Betty Brader's style. Gump's found Betty Brader in Monterey later on, after she had married and moved away. She did some fashion figures for the opening of the Givenchy Boutique for Gump's in April, 1970.

Gump: When I joined the union, I also had an agent. So I said, "Well, it's not up to me. They're the ones that set the price." I was under contract to an agent. And that was a great relief.

And this German band, you see, they used to ask, "Will you come to the opening of some fair?" or something. Well, maybe it didn't mean anything. After I joined the union when they would say, "Do you want to do this thing?" I would say, "Yes, that's very important that we play up there." Say in Vallejo, some charity thing. Fine. And if they couldn't afford to pay our fee, which was a union rate, not cheap, and the cause was worthy, then the union pays for it in those cases.* This is the technical side of the union. But it is worthwhile knowing the advantages of the unions. They could serve as buffers for groups soliciting service for free or otherwise just as my lecture agent could screen and evaluate inquiries for my talks.

Location, Union Square Area

Riess: Were Union Square and Post Street always the heartland of merchandising?

Gump: Yes, well, we in San Francisco boast about the hills and the view and the Golden Gate. (You would think that we did it ourselves. They forget God probably had a hand in there, too, but He's secondary compared to the Chamber of Commerce.) But anyway, we're very fortunate because there's a sort of an area where merchandising is between Mason Street down to Market then up to about Bush Street, that triangle; then Bush runs way down into Market again. You've got a 45 degree angle, in other words, a triangle in there.

At one time my father wanted to move the store out to Van Ness Avenue. The old Spreckels Mansion was still out there, and it was a pretty good copy of a French Renaissance chateau, like the ones they had on Fifth Avenue in New York for a long time.

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Gump: He wanted to move the store out to this chateau. His two brothers who were the majority out of three said, "No, we ought to stay downtown." That was some time after the fire. So they decided to

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*The Musicians' Union has a transcription fund from which they pay their members for approved, charitable non-profit events, as they won't allow their members to play for nothing.

Gump: stay downtown. Also the White House was out there. That was right after the fire that they moved out. You see, I think they blew up everything along up to Van Ness Avenue.

I can vaguely remember the temporary store on California Street between Polk and Van Ness. That was quite a few years ago; that was seventy-five years ago at least. I remember going in there. My uncle's wife, Aunt Camille said, "Oh, there he is!" I remember her yelling to me from the balcony. And there I am. I started taking my bows at that moment, before becoming a ham. [laughs]

Riess: Oh, that's great!

Gump: You see, that's an ego-building thing, that's why I remember it.

Riess: You were saying there were great advantages in the Union Square area.

Gump: Yes. I'll tell you what--there was a deposition taken with me [July 18, 1977] and we could look that up.* It's rather interesting, the way I explained this whole thing about this triangle. And we're lucky, because if you consider downtown Detroit where all the shops are, and they have this Hudson's--that's practically a zero now because nobody wants to go into that area anymore. Dayton-Hudson--Dayton was able to buy there cheap because nobody wanted to go there. You take L.A.: at one time the Bullock's on Wilshire was the smart place. But nobody wants to go there now.

Riess: Why has it worked so well for downtown in San Francisco?

Gump: Well, because we're lucky. There was no other place to move to that would have been an advantage. That's why I brought up the thing about Gump's moving out to this Spreckel's mansion.

Riess: Downtown was never challenged.

Gump: No, nobody ever thought of it. So we went right back to where we were. You see, we were on Geary, between Grant and Stockton Streets. It was 113-115 Geary, there on the south side. We had a store there. Before that there was a store at 581-583 Market Street. Then the fire came along and that knocked the whole thing to nothing. After the 1906 fire we moved to 1645 California Street between Van Ness and Polk. Then we had this opportunity to return to Union Square in 1909 by leasing and eventually buying the building at 250 Post Street.

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*Following

modern building?

A. No, I don't, because that's a habit of the public, going to that particular area, that area around Union Square for shopping. Gump's has got the most exclusive wares and lines for the whole area, in what they sell.

I don't see why changing the location of that -- I almost say conceitedly -- gem store in a gem location built around a name. I think moving it would be madness.

Q. Do you think that the old store is in and of itself an advantage?

A. Yes. As a matter of fact, there was drawings made one time, that I haven't mentioned before, to modernize the front of Gump's. And I said, "Absolutely not." I wanted to show tradition. And we kept the same front as was on the store in 1909, to show tradition.

Now, I look at the designs they made -- that was in 1947. We had to do over a lot of it because we had to move out of the annex temporarily for a while when it was bought by -- I won't go into those details.

But anyway, we had to try and make the whole operation under our own roof. And there was some drawings made of the front, which was modern in 1947. Now, I thank God we didn't make the changes, because it would have dated it to '47 instead of dating it to the tradition in 1909, when we moved up there after the fire.

Q. In your opinion --

A. I wanted the tradition that we built the store around to stay and to have that front look like that tradition.

Q. In your opinion, would there be any hazard or risk that the exclusivity that is now enjoyed by Gump's might be lost through either expansion or modernization?

A. Yes. It is a subconscious feeling that the public, I am almost sure of that. As a matter of fact, that's why we were the first people in the world -- when I was a designer, I boastfully quote -- that we were the first people in the world to have those awnings sticking out over a sidewalk.

When you get under those awnings, and I put in big glass doors, you're almost halfway in the store. I did that on purpose to get people feeling you are in the store.

And I know Hasting's had an entrance down the block that just had no awnings on it, and you always walked by there. I don't say always do, but there is less feeling of wanting to walk in the store.

But I did have those awnings put in. And they are permanent. At first, they thought that maybe the fire department wouldn't OK that. But they did, because they wanted people to feel they were going into this traditional store.

And another thing I fought for was to have things of all price in good taste, which I think McMillan is carrying on very well. Because the carriage trade was disappearing after the war.

Now, I understand there is new million- and billionaires, well, they come in there. We haven't frightened them.

Q. In the operation of Gump's and the S & G Company, before the liquidation of S & G Company, was there any kind of a funded reserve, to your knowledge?

A. It wasn't funded, that I know of. Didn't you get that

Richard Gump's deposition of July 18. 1977, in San Francisco, includes these two pages dealing with the location of Gump's. The complete deposition is deposited in The Bancroft Library.

Gump: In this deposition I mention about how at that time I said, "Well, it must be good because the White House took a 99-year lease on their property." Of course then something happened to it. I could probably take the place over and build it into quite a business. Macy's had moved in to Union Square and they spent a fortune on store fixtures, to make people think it's very good.

Advertising, Specials and Catalogs

Riess: Who handled Gump's advertising? Was that done in the store, or did you have an agency?

Gump: Well, it was all kinds of things. We had certain outside people suggest certain campaigns and certain ideas of how to sell stuff.* Most of the art work, the layout was done in the store itself. We had very good people. One fellow who has been there for about thirty years--he's not so well now--Will Sanderson, had excellent taste. He knows the difference between a serif and a tea cup--or a tea cup and a hiccup, that's better. [laughs] That's a good line; put that in.

Riess: Did you appear in the Chronicle every day with an ad?

Gump: Not necessarily every day. Depending on the days or the time of year.

Riess: Did you get involved in that?

Gump: Oh yes, sure. Way back in the twenties I was into it. I won't say I was any good at it.

Riess: Did it bring in business, do you think?

Gump: Well, yes, usually we mentioned about discounts on certain stuff. Not that we were a discount store. But let's say Wedgwood, to use a name, was $50 a place setting, their so-called bone china, and the factory back in England said that it was all right if we wanted to use discounts all over the country, whoever has Wedgwood can knock off 15 percent of whatever. So we advertised the fact that it was

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*Knollin Advertising, 391 Sutter St., with Tom McNamara and Paul O. Michelson, in 1945, 1946. They instituted the famous "Gump's Memos," the Cable Car Series in Time Magazine [see Appendices] and Deane Dickason's radio commentary. Other agencies were Abbott Kimball Co., Harrington, Whitney & Hurst, and Malcolm Dewees, Inc.

Gump: off 15 percent; in case somebody ever bought that as their pattern, they would want to run down some more of their pattern at 15 percent off. It wasn't a phony, we never ran any phonies. Where the price is $100 and it's a "special" now at $75, or whatever, actually what their retail is anyway, those are phonies, these so-called discounts, you know.

Riess: Your absolutely choice things, a Georgian silver teapot, how did that get advertised?

Gump: We didn't advertise it. It was all word-of-mouth.

After I sold the place they only did what is usually done by other stores. I kept saying, "Stay out of the rat race." It's very important. If you have a reputation for having things that are different, why go and have things that are the same? Then you lose your reputation.

It reminds me of F. Scott Fitzgerald. I think I mentioned this before, that they hired and paid quite a lot for his talent out in Hollywood. His letters to his daughter are wonderful letters. He says, "I notice now that they're paying a nice salary because it makes you very comfortable, my dear daughter," etc. "But after paying us, they're doing their best to change what they paid for." And that's exactly what's happened to our store.

Riess: Did you put out a catalog in your time at the store?

Gump: Yes. Also my brother did in the late thirties. It was called "Gump's View of the Mode," and later it was "Gifts from Gump's 1941," and also 1943. During my time we continued with an annual catalog, really a gift brochure, for release before the holidays, with wonderful results. It was one of the first really good-looking brochures. Now Gump's releases several catalogs each year. Recently with this traffic problem not only Gump's but most big merchants have found out that you can get an awful lot of business by catalogs. People don't want to drive downtown, whether it's in Detroit or whether it's in Chicago. Now I understand people hardly go into the Loop in Chicago where Marshall Field's and Carson-Pirie-Scott and all those people are, right there. So they have branches spotted around and they're doing a terrific business in the branches. That's the reason the catalogs are doing so well in these places. We try to have stuff that's different.

I was looking through there [Gump's 1987 catalog] and there are some very good values. I was amazed. It equals the less expensive stores.

Riess: Oh, really?

Gump's View of the Mode

PUBLISHED BY S. & G. GUMP CO. • 250 POST STREET • SAN FRANCISCO • HONOLULU • VOL. I NO. 2

PHOTOGRAPHS IN THIS ISSUE BY TRUMAN BAILEY

BLUE NOTES IN THE SPRING SONG

AZTEC STONE SCULPTURE

GUMP'S

CHALLENGES THE IMAGINATION

A visit to Gump's is always stimulating. Whether you come for the first or the thousandth time, you are certain to discover something new or something very old that you have never seen before. For example, how many of these Gump collections have you seen?

The Aztec Stone Statues—artistic expressions of the ancient culture of Mexico, dating from long before the conquest by Cortez.

The Cambodian Collection — sculpture from the recently discovered Temple of Angkor Vat, the monument of a mysterious race. Where they came from or whither they vanished nobody knows.

The Silver Salon, whose two large rooms are not nearly large enough to show our entire collection of antique and contemporary silver.

The Gump Galleries—where the works of the old masters and the young moderns participate in a continuous, ever changing exhibit.

Meztec Furniture — modern interpretations of ancient Aztec themes expressed in furniture for the garden and patio. Exclusive creations of Gump's.

The collection of Japanese Lacquer—one of the most interesting collections of this exquisite Oriental art in existence.

The Pietro Ferloni Tapestries—two of a set executed on the Papal looms at Rome between 1732-1736. The rest of this set is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The Jade Seal of the Empress Dowager Yi, ancestor of the recently crowned ruler of Manchukuo, Henry Pu Yi, now Emperor Kang Teh.

These are but a few of the spectacular things to be seen at Gump's. Come often, you are always welcome to browse to your heart's content.

Gump's "View of the Mode" does not pretend to be a complete catalogue of Gump's merchandise, but rather simply what the name implies . . . our view of the mode at the moment.

Consequently objects shown are often limited in quantity, frequently to only one of a kind. This being the case, we cannot guarantee the length of time that articles shown in "View of the Mode" will be available. We advise you to shop early as the surest way to avoid disappointments . . . for the most desirable items are the soonest gone.

GUMP'S FOR GIFTS

In such a treasure house as Gump's it is hardly necessary for us to say that it is easy to find gifts to suit any personality or any occasion. But we particularly want to remind you that at Gump's, you can also find gifts to suit any budget. *Two names belong on every gift you give—yours and Gump's.*

MAIL ORDERS

If you cannot come to Gump's personally, you can order by mail with assurance. Your purchases will be intelligently and tastefully selected and carefully packed and shipped.

Address your orders to

S. & G. Gump Co.

250 Post Street • San Francisco

HONOLULU, T. H.

Kalakaua Avenue and Lewers Road

THE COVER

Shows a starry screen in the background, 45.00; a modern metal table with blue glass top, 55.00; lamp complete, 17.00; a metal chair, 48.00; cotton pajamas, 6.00; and a white hemp rug, size 9 x 12, 55.00.

Gump: Yes, in glassware, for instance. Wine will taste just as good or bad in these glasses, but it's nice if it comes in a Gump's package. Somebody was saying the other day how she is thrilled when she sees she's got a package from Gump's.

Attending to Salespeople, and Customers

Riess: I read that Stanley Marcus met with all his salespeople once a month. Did you?

Gump: No. I used to, I did quite a bit, then I stopped. I have some nice pictures of gothic cathedrals in England and France, and I remember lecturing on that.

Riess: To the salespeople?

Gump: To the whole store, not just the sales staff. No, whenever possible I talked to the whole place. You make them feel that they're learning something from the boss. I remember one time we had one of those meetings, which weren't too often. I should have had more of them. But I told them, "Now look, I want you people to be happy. Otherwise my investment and your time isn't paying off unless you're happy. After all, one-third of your life you're devoting to this place, eight hours out of twenty-four. We imagine you have another eight hours sleep. I don't know; sometimes I wonder, when I look at the way sales tags are written, or I look at the behavior. But anyway, I don't believe in doubting everybody."

So I went on in that vein. And I said, "Your being happy is a good investment as far as I'm concerned. I try to watch the behavior of executives around this place, and I think it pays off pretty well because we're getting better. Next year I don't expect too much. They expect inflation to be such-and-such and so we should have at least 10 or 15 percent more sales. As far as I'm concerned, if they're 5 percent less, I'd be happy. Not that I can't stand success or can't stand all this money. I like money very much. That's why I'm a Republican. But I don't want anybody breathing down anybody's neck because they're not keeping up the so-called quota."

That's another thing that was brought in from Macmillan that got me furious. I have this article from Time Magazine, saying I never believe in breathing down people's necks and pushing the people for sales. I think you have it.

Riess: Yes.

When something came in like a great piece of jade, would your salespeople have a list of people that they would then phone?

Gump: Sure, they had collectors, yes.

Riess: Did you have a V.I.P. shopping service where customers could call in and have it done for them?

Gump: Well, certain salespeople got to know certain people well.

##

Riess: My impression is that on an ordinary day 95 percent of the shoppers at Gump's would be women.

Gump: Yes, that's true.

Riess: But maybe the important buyers for the museums were men?

Gump: Yes, they would be men usually. Or else it might be women on some committee or on some board of some museum looking for something.

Riess: I wondered if you in some ways particularly catered to the female.

Gump: Yes, we definitely did.

This is amusing. Once I set up a table in the store to photograph to use as an example of a lot of money being spent on modern accoutrements in the most garish taste possible. I had it set for fourteen people. I wanted to use pictures of it to illustrate my lectures. You'd be amazed, 50 percent of the women who saw it said, "Oh, isn't that beautiful!" They were thinking mostly of the man hours, the cutlery, the glass, etc.

The flatware I used for that was one that I hated, Grand Baroque by Wallace. I insulted it so much around the country that they begged me please to lay off. I said it was like grabbing a bunch of nettles to grab hold of the fork. Of course in that complicated design there's less chance of showing bad workmanship, you see. It's concealed in all the intricacy. Whereas a plain thing—I don't say all plain things are good, that's not the idea, though sometimes I was accused of that.

I had a guy, he knew all about my design test. He worked on the test with me. He was from New York and he happened to select Grand Baroque, he and his wife use it. I said, "That's too bad. You hadn't my good influence!" [laughter]

TIME
THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE
TIME, SEPTEMBER 29, 1961

RETAILING

Low-Pressure Profits

While more and more retailers stampede customers with discount prices and waylay them near home with suburban branches, the pride of San Francisco's Post Street, Gump's Inc., prospers by remaining as aloof as Kipling's cat. With arrogant contempt for trends, Gump's eight years ago sold its only two branch stores (in Honolulu and Carmel, Calif.), and the nearest thing to a loss leader a Gump's customer can expect to find is a pair of pewter and brass candlesticks reduced from $250 to $125. Yet in a little more than a decade, Gump's sales have almost doubled, last year approached $4,000,000, with profits before taxes running a comfortable 6% of gross.

Driving the century-old family store to new heights is a white-haired, crew-cut retailing iconoclast, Richard Benjamin Gump, 55, grandson of the founder. When Dick Gump took over full management in 1947, his father, A. (for Abraham) Livingston Gump, had already built the store into one of the Occident's richest treasure houses of the Orient's art. Dick shocked Gump's older patrons by streamlining the temple-quiet, museumlike showrooms into tastefully contemporary salesrooms. And though the Oriental accent still dominates, Gump's small task force of buyers, led by Dick himself, scours Latin America and Europe to bring in a greater variety of art, antiques and home furnishings.

Taste Setter. To bolster his store's carriage-trade appeal, outspoken Dick Gump long ago set out to establish himself as an arbiter of good taste. On lecture tours and in a widely sold book (*Good Taste Costs No More*), he has waged incessant war against what he considers bad design. One of his targets was none other than New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art; he was distressed by the museum's pride in a gold cup made by Benvenuto Cellini in the shape of an ornate shell resting on a dragon riding on a turtle. Shudders Gump: "It's really pretty horrible."

Gump's own taste in all things has not been universally admired. The New York *Times* said that his favorite hobby—the Guckenheimer Sour Kraut German Band, which he leads in irregular concerts in San Francisco—deserves "a special place in the history of musical mayhem." But in matters artistic, Gump's has established itself as a place where people not sure of their own judgment may buy confidently. "Bargains are not the house specialty, but not everything is expensive: on the same page in the Gump catalogue, a gold-finished compact with a jade medallion is listed for $13.75 and a jade and diamond ring for $10,000.

GUMP AS GUCKENHEIMER
A taste for musical mayhem.

Soft Sell. Gump thinks that his store's reputation rests primarily on the casual soft sell practiced by its knowledgeable sales staff. "I've told them," says Gump, "that if we don't carry an item, tell the customer where he can buy it. Don't tell him we have something better. The customer thinks, 'Isn't it nice of Gump's to tell me where to find it,' and he comes back to Gump's."

Though he is at heart as hard-driving a retailer as any discounter going, Gump strains for casualness in his store, adamantly refuses to set sales quotas for his 170 employees. One year, he relates, "I told a sales meeting, 'I expect 10% less sales next year.' That year our sales went up 15%." In 1961 it seems certain that Gump's business will hit another high, but even though the year is well along, Dick Gump still refuses to predict what sales will be. "If you had a projected sales figure," says he, "you'd have to exert pressure to make it."

The Book Business

Riess: How did you come to do the Good Taste book?

Gump: Donald Friede was wandering around the store one time and I explained my personal philosophy about merchandise and merchandising to him. I was introduced to the West Coast editor of Doubleday, Howard Cady, who asked for a resume of what I would put into a book. After that was done I wrote Good Taste Costs No More, which happened to be our store slogan at the time. The book was released in 1951 by Doubleday and again as a paperback by Macmillan in 1970. We used the slogan for many years.

Riess: In Good Taste Costs No More you acknowledge the help of Ross Wills and Ben Davis. Who were they?

Gump: I've mentioned Ben Davis. He worked as the head of our interior design department at one time. (See p. 90.)

Riess: And Ross Wills?

Gump: A researcher. The editors at Doubleday, after Good Taste Costs No More they asked me to do a book on retailing. I spent a long time on that. That was 1955 and Ross Wills did an awful lot of research for me and my wife at the time. Gee, I had some marvelous material. I had gotten together an enormous amount of interesting stuff. It would have blown the hats off the heads of all of Detroit. I wouldn't write anything I couldn't verify. Everything I would have put in there was authentic, about how they manipulated the automobile market.

Riess: What happened to the book?

Gump: My wife and I--we were disagreeing at the time, and we gave it up.

Riess: Was Good Taste Costs No More a commercial success?

Gump: Yes, it sold I think about 25,000 copies.

Riess: Did you sell it in the store?

Gump: Yes, but we didn't press it.

Riess: And at your lectures?

Gump: Yes, but my publisher, Doubleday--usually the books weren't there! I remember when I was lecturing at Ayres & Co. in Indianapolis, they had a hundred books there and I sold all of them to the audience. But usually the books would not have arrived in time. And I gather from others that this is common with Doubleday.

Gump: Of course the people in the book business never could sell books, never could. They don't know the first thing about merchandising. For instance, when they bring out XYZ by Joe Blow and it's a big seller why don't they bring it out in cassette form so the housewife can listen to it when she's doing her housework, or put the cassette in the car? There are no more backwards people than the book people. Another thing is that they always promote the new, forgetting the thing that was selling and that was successful.

Riess: Well, we've talked about the store, the design test, the book—.

Gump: One thing I have to emphasize. I inherited this high-speed horse, you know. I didn't want to just keep him in the barn. I wanted to let him run. So if I had certain ideas about how to make this horse win I didn't want to be stopped. Fortunately I was head of the place and I could really let the horse go. I chose to be as conscientious as possible about giving the public what in general is considered to be good taste or good design. I thought it was such an opportunity, and it worked very well, that's all I can say.

A Room in Richard Gump's Townhouse

Riess: And before I leave, we were talking about this wonderful living room. What color is it?

Gump: Brick red, burnt sienna, I don't know.

Riess: This burnt sienna room--.

Gump: No, don't say burnt sienna, it isn't burnt sienna. Brick red would be more what people imagine.

Riess: What kind of a rug is this?

Gump: It's an Imperial rug. And the interesting thing about the red in there is that it was this color red originally. All the Chinese rugs have faded into that brick color. This is the original color, this red. It's a funny thing. I bought this in the biggest shop in Florence, the Haas store on Tornabuoni, about ten years ago. I saw it in the basement for $1,000. Today it would be $10,000. The prices of Chinese rugs have actually gone up ten times.

I had another color on the wall at one time; it was awful. So I changed the wall colors. Like I said, the first time I really had the department heads together in this big meeting when I was more or less the all-powerful president, I said, "There's one thing you're going to get used to here, one thing that is consistent--as long as there's something that's going to be consistent, you might as well

Gump: depend on it--and that's change." If I didn't like the color of a wall I'd change it. And I've done the same thing here. That's how we discovered these nice colors.

Riess: The floor is a kind of blue-black.

Gump: Well, it's a very cheap tile but it looks just exactly like slate.

Riess: And you designed the two shallow cupboards.

Gump: Yes. A friend of mine whom I hadn't seen in a long time couldn't get over those. Leigh B. Block, the very famous collector of modern--he's got the best collection in the world of modern paintings, for instance, he owns the Van Gogh with the ears cut off, that's in his private collection, that will give you an idea of the quality of stuff he has--he came in here when this room wasn't finished and he said, "Oh, those two cabinets are my favorites in the whole room." He didn't know anything about Gandhara. But the cupboards were his favorites.

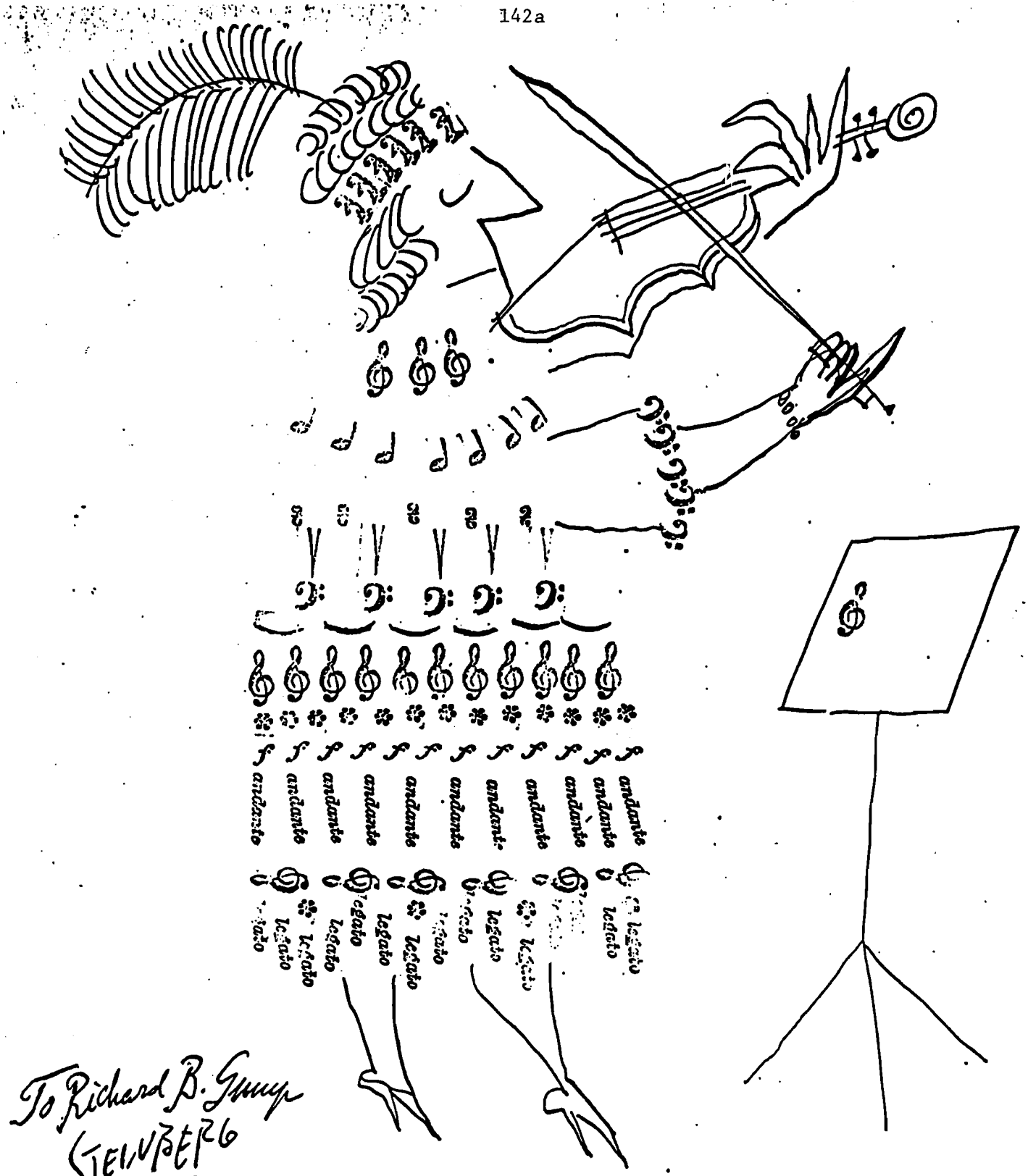
What I had planned to do on them originally was to make a drawing in a certain style, Chinese, Oriental gold. I don't mean heavy gold; just the lines would be in gold. It's very easy to do. You just put down the varnish and then you just put the gold leaf on it and rub it off. But after I got done with that I thought I'd let it stay like that. It's amusing. The molding and all that came from San Francisco.

Riess: One cupboard is full of splendid Georgian silver and the other has the two T'ang figures.

And what painting is it that you have loaned for the Ian White exhibit? The round Renaissance madonna?

Gump: Tondo, they call her in Italian. I'll show you a picture of it. [shows her in book]

Riess: That's lovely.



To Richard B. Gump
STEINBERG
1952

Note from Saul Steimberg:

"Dear Mr. Gump: Thank you for the music rubber stamps, very beautiful and useful. I used them in many ways (architecture, flowers, and so forth) and I enclose here a sample for you.

With thanks again for your kind thought.

Sincerely,
Saul Steinberg"

VIII MUSICAL LIFE

"A Lousy Musician"##

Riess: Let's take up Richard Gump as musician and composer today.

Gump: It would be better to tell the readers that I wouldn't have myself in any orchestra or band because I'm a lousy musician. I can't read quickly. When I studied piano in my teens I had a marvelous touch and all that, but I couldn't read quickly, which is very important. And the same thing with the clarinet.

I studied clarinet with Mr. Randall, the first clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony in the early twenties. He worked on tone with me. The same thing as with the piano. The piano is all touch, tone, which I know. I think I used to sound very majestic on the piano. I don't anymore because I have no technique. But neither one of them taught me to read quickly. I didn't start reading music on the clarinet until I organized my German band. Then I found I could actually read right off the bat. But I wasn't studying that; I was studying to have a tone as good as his, which was excellent. I'm talking about the clarinet now.

Riess: So if your ability to read music had been greater do you think that you would really have made it a career?

---

*Mr. Gump added later a note that Ludwig Altman, organist and choir director for fifty years at Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, in instructing his choir for performance of Mr. Gump's "Psalm 150," March 1975, introduced Mr. Gump by name to the singers and said, "Now, please listen to the Maestro." Mr. Gump said, "From a man who was internationally known as a great organist, his calling me Maestro was the ultimate compliment."

Gump: Well, that's a big "if" question; I don't know. It's a question I never thought about. I'm glad you brought that up. I was thinking of writing a book called I'm Glad You Brought That Up. [laughter]

Performances

Riess: In Honolulu you had your works performed, didn't you?

Gump: Yes, one movement of a symphonic suite that I wrote called Polynesian Impression. Only the first movement was done by the Honolulu Symphony December 19, 1940. The three movements were Nature, Romance, and Dance. The Dance was played later by the Oakland Symphony (May 10, 1942). And it was used by the Oakland Ballet, too. Another work of mine entitled "Nocturne at Angkor Wat" was played by the Honolulu String Quartet in early 1941. After I left the Islands, my symphonic work, Seven Variations on an American Theme, was performed by the Honolulu Symphony March 15, 1955 and again on July 4, 1957.

Riess: Did you have to promote your work?

Gump: No. That's a very good question. You never get anyplace trying to promote your own music, or even promote pictures, or something. I certainly have never paid anyone to perform my music in public. Just let somebody else discover you, then they build their egos. If you push the stuff yourself, if you've got to put it over, they don't like it. I know I didn't like it when artists did that to me.

Riess: And then you also wrote Cambodian Impression which was played by the Honolulu String Quartet [early 1941].

Gump: That's right. It was played by the Honolulu String Quartet, who were excellent musicians, the four best string players in the Islands.

I'll tell you what about the Cambodian Impression was remarkable--not that I wrote it. But I called it "Nocturne at Angkor." And this girl came up to me who worked in the store. She said, "Where's Angkor? I don't know where that is, but I pictured ruins in the jungle." Well, how in the world did I do that in music? She didn't know what it was about. And to top that, I put that on a cassette, and I looked at Angkor in the moonlight years later—I'll tell you when it was, 1970, and that was performed in 1941, that's quite a space--and I put that on, and it's just like a scene I looked at when I was there, at Angkor Wat. Because I went through there quite often, and was there with two of our buyers and my girlfriend, we went there.

Gump: But anyway, it's amazing how it was like that. The mood was like the place itself. See, I wrote that before I had ever been there.

Riess: How did you choose that title?

Gump: Because I thought that that particular art was remarkable, the Khmer as they call it. That particular art I liked. We had a few Khmer pieces in the store. I have some very nice Khmer stuff here now.

Well, anyway, that's the string quartet. So the first movement of my Polynesian Impression was performed. The second movement was a romance; the third movement was a dance. Those are authentic dances, too. I remember, I had a o'opa, which is an ancient Hawaiian dance step, a very slow rhythm. And I had a siva-siva which is also Polynesian, but from Samoa. [It means dance in Samoan.] And then I had also a regular Tahitian dance, hiro-e. [hums a melody] Wonderful, and I just put the music with that.

Anyway, that was a theme in that, too. It was actually authentic Polynesian music, such as it is. The Bishop Museum had done a lot of research on Polynesian music. They had hardly anything. For instance, steel guitars were supposed to come out of Hawaii. It's in the Bishop Museum's book on music. They even give the name of the guy who invented it, way ahead of the regular guitar. You use a pocket comb for that, for where they use the steel on top of the slide. There's some awful corny stuff in Western music: "My girl done left me crying," all that sort of stuff. [wails, imitating slide guitar]

Riess: These pieces that you had performed in Hawaii--had you composed them in Hollywood?

Gump: Yes. In fact, I wrote the quartet in 1934, I think it was. I can't remember, it's so far back. I was really buried into Hollywood.

Inspiration and Influences in Composing

Riess: How did these tunes come to you? Tell me about yourself as a creative artist.

Gump: Well, that's a good question. I remember when I composed a thing I called "Safari." I fooled around on the piano and got this theme and I thought, "Geez," and I kept repeating it. It goes on and on. I have that in a string quartet, too. And it sounds like a safari, I guess. I thought it was very descriptive of that.

following p. 145

Record jacket: "Impressions from Many Lands," with illustrations from Florence and Moorea by Richard Gump, 1976.

POLYNESIAN IMPRESSION • SYMPHONIC SUITE

BY RICHARD GUMP

● *Polynesian Impression* is a suite in three movements entitled respectively, *Nature, Romance, Dance.*

As each movement is a complete thought in itself, each could be played individually. However, because of thematic material which reoccurs throughout the suite, it is preferable to play the complete suite at one time, thus giving three different pictures of ancient Polynesia.

The first movement, *Nature,* was played by the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra December 19, 1940.

The entire suite was completed December 30, 1940.

NATURE

● This is a portrayal of emotional reactions caused by various phases of Nature.

It is dawn. A palm-lined seashore is lapped by gentle waters of a quiet lagoon. Day advances.

With a distinct change in tempo, a hidden valley is pictured and the short horn-call is descriptive of man trespassing on seemingly sacred haunts of Nature, and Nature's awakening to his intrusion. This theme reoccurs in ever-changing moods, picturing many valleys, waterfalls, swiftly-running streams, and dense foliage dripping into still pools.

These images are succeeded by one of mighty green peaks, crowned with an ever-present veil of misting clouds.

The next image is one of a more mysterious and secluded valley where one feels the aura of Nature's supernatural forces, and in which ancient gods of Polynesia seem to be lurking.

The impression changes; from a mountain-top a glorious panorama is unfolded.

The closing image is of the exquisite magic of the seashore; this time silvered by a tropic moon.

ROMANCE

● This movement is a primitive idyl.

A maiden sits waiting for the return of the men, who have gone on a long voyage.

A solo horn, suggesting a call sounded by a primitive conch-shell, announces their coming. This is followed by a short majestic passage.

The girl is struck by the appearance of a youth, who in turn notices her charm. From coquetry true desire grows, which is described by the horn-call now heard in full lyrical song. She shrinks from his eager advances, however, and flees.

He pursues her through the forest, through hidden valleys, by waterfalls.

He finally overtakes her; she relents, and their love becomes complete ecstasy and bliss.

DANCE

● Although the thematic material and rhythms of this movement are authentic, it is more than just a symphonic transcription of Polynesian motives and chants — the material used has been developed freely in spite of the fact that the primitive dance mood has been retained.

The trombones open with an ancient Hawaiian *oli* or chant, then the percussion uses a typical Hawaiian *olapa* rhythm. This introduction theme is developed for some length.

Here a new rhythm is introduced by the kettle-drums and is joined by a counter-rhythm on the tom-tom. This, typical of a Tahitian *otea,* or ceremonial dance, continues as it is joined by a third rhythm, that of the Tahitian *uti,* played on the strings. As these continue, the main theme of the finale enters. It is the ancient Tahitian chant *Hiro-é,* played in its original form by the oboe and picolo. During the long development of this theme, we notice a continual repetition of the chords D major for three beats, and E minor for the fourth beat; this is typical of the *uti.*

The tom-tom rhythm changes — we hear the characteristic beat of the Samoan *siva-siva* opening the trio. In humorous manner the bassoons and solo violin then play the authentic *siva-siva* chant to primitive harmonies, and the chant is repeated and developed symphonically.

After the usual dance-form repeat, the coda closes the movement with *Hiro-é,* played in majestic counterpoint against the *olapa* theme of the introduction.

LEADING HIS OWN SYMPHONY: Richard Gump, whose orchestral work, Polynesian Impression, will be played December 19, is pictured above leading the Honolulu Symphony orchestra in his own work. This is the first orchestral work dealing with Polynesia in a classical vein ever played here.—Senick photo.

Symphony Orchestra To Play Gump's Polynesian Suite

By BETTY MACDONALD

When Symphony Director Fritz Hart lifts his baton December 19 at the University of Hawaii, the audience will hear, for the first time, an orchestral work in a classical vein dealing with Polynesia.

Composer and orchestrator is Richard Gump, son of A. Livingston Gump, San Francisco's famous jade collector. His suite, Polynesian Impression, is a tone picture of the South Seas.

The work is a result of many years of traveling and research in Polynesia, with six months spent in Tahiti. A French-Tahitan musician, Tautu Archer, helped Mr. Gump with some of the ancient chants.

"I wrote Polynesian Impression in Honolulu in my spare time during the past year," Mr. Gump explained. "I believe that Hawaiian music should be raised above the popular music field. There is a great scope in the pure and ancient folk music of the islands, just as there was in the Hungarian and Russian songs adapted by Liszt and Brahms.

Mr. Gump has written background music for films, chamber music and popular songs including My Tane, Tropical Heaven, Under the Spreading Coconut Tree, Give Me Hawaii and You, and Hawaiian Charm. He doesn't take his popular work very seriously, but he is enthusiastic about his classical suite. His Impression includes three movements, Nature, Romance and Dance.

"In the first movement, which they are playing at the university, there is no attempt to produce man made sounds," he said. "It is a tone picture of any tropical island, from the seashore wandering into rich verdure of valleys. The second movement deals with romance, the third is a direct use of an old chant as a background for the complex dance rhythms of Polynesia."

In raising the standards of Polynesian music above the popular field, Mr. Gump feels that an artist can make a definite contribution to island culture.

No admission will be charged at the Honolulu Symphony concert which will be given at the university gymnasium at 8 p. m.

Honolulu Star-Bulletin
Friday, December 13, 1940

Gump: I'm sure I could write music for pictures because the man I studied with, Domenico Brescia, taught an awful lot of the guys who wrote background music for the movies in the twenties and thirties. I know a couple of them.

Riess: Did you compose at the piano?

Gump: Yes, but sometimes I do it away from the piano. I use the piano more to prove what I think I've written, you see. Because you can't sing four voices. You can hear four voices at once, a dominant seventh or a diminished seventh or whatever, you can hear those voices mentally. I would try it out on the piano and sometimes it didn't work. I might cue in harmony on this stuff.

Where it comes from, I don't know. I create in various ways, how these things come to me.

Riess: Did you surround yourself with music? Have you always been listening to music, classical?

Gump: Yes, as far as I remember. You see, when I shot myself then I couldn't go into athletics, then I decided I wanted to write music, because I enjoyed it anyway. I enjoyed listening to the San Francisco Symphony, Alfred Hertz, I enjoyed that very much. It inspired me to try to do something like that. So I started writing stuff. Fortunately I took lessons from the best man on the west coast, Domenico Brescia.

Riess: Did Hertz conduct any of the modern music? Did he conduct Stravinsky and Shostakovich?

Gump: Yes, 19th and 20th century. Stuff that's popular today he did. He brought out some stuff. I remember he did Mahler's Second Symphony. That's the one with the chorus, but he left out the chorus because he didn't have that at his fingertips, which they have today. (I think they're going to do Mahler's Second in this series of the Symphony [referring to 1987-88 season]). No, he was quite progressive. In fact, Hertz got in dutch with Germany because he conducted Parsifal at the Metropolitan and it was in Wagner's will that it wasn't to be played until fifty years after his death. And Hertz conducted it in 1915 or '16, I think. You can imagine when the Wagner estate, whatever that was, learned of that! Wagner's grandsons were in the music business; Siegfried was his son--he had two sons, I think.

Riess: Why was Parsifal not to be performed?

Gump: Because Wagner said he didn't want it to be. That was the last thing he wrote. In fact he finished it up in Ravello on the Amalfi coast.

Riess: Ravello?

Gump: Ravello, R-A-V-E-L-L-O, I know it backwards. I've painted pictures up there.

Riess: So in any case, there was that kind of music you listened to. Did you go to jazz places?

Gump: Oh, once in a while, sure. There was a very good combination on the corner of Sutter and Fillmore. People would go there just to hear it. A person named Cooper was the pianist, an excellent musician. He's not here anymore, he's gone east. Johnny Cooper, he's very well-known, a very well-bred guy. I knew him quite well personally. I knew that he knew quite a bit about music, besides being able to play all this jazz stuff. Jazz--I mean, there are so many forms--I don't understand today's music at all. They asked [Artur] Rubinstein--because he was talking to a whole group of kids at some school in the east, I've forgotten where it was--but they asked him about modern music. He said, "I don't criticize what I don't understand." It's like somebody who asked Picasso, "What does that picture represent?" and he said, "$350,000." Of course, Rubinstein was great on Chopin and all the classics, as you know.

Riess: What kind of connections did you have with the musical institutions of San Francisco? I know you are on the Symphony Board of Governors now.

Gump: Yes. That doesn't mean you're a musician.

Riess: Earlier you were involved with the San Francisco Conservatory? I know you know Milton and Peggy Salkind.

Gump: Well, they heard this work of mine, the Seven Variations on an American Theme, it was played by the Marin Symphony. Gastone Usigli conducted it in 1953. He'sdead now. I didn't know if it would be played. It was quite a job because it's very heavy orchestration.

Riess: Your Fantasia for Four Hands was played by Milton and Peggy Salkind. [San Francisco Museum of Art, March 10, 1954]

Gump: That's what I was going to say. They heard that and they asked me--they lived over in Sausalito where I lived at the time, and they said, "Would you write something for us?" I said, "Sure." It's the Fantasia for Four Hands which they performed quite a bit in this country. They did it in Washington at the Phillips Gallery. They also played it for their debut recital in 1955 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. So that's been spread around.

I hadn't seen Peggy for years and then I saw her the other day. She asked me if I had a movement that she could play in a concert. I said, "No, I haven't got anything in particular for piano. But

Gump: I'll be happy to write something," which I'm working on now. Mentally I'm working on it. I haven't got the idea yet. So you ask me these questions. I'm working on that mentally, what I'm going to do. I can't just write some music and say this is it.

I wrote something for Boris Blinder, the first chair of the San Francisco Symphony for thirty years, something for cello alone. It wasn't played in concert. He played it around, or he did play it. He died the other day, at age 84.

Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band Beginnings

Riess: How did the Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band take shape?

Gump: There was a fellow living with my wife and myself at that time. He used to help in the garden. He played various instruments; he had been a professional musician at one time. My wife and I knew that he played. But we didn't have any idea. It was my mother-in-law who said, "Well, why don't you get up a German band?" I said, "That's a good idea." So that's how it started. We were talking about going around Sausalito and singing Christmas carols. I thought this was a more original idea.

Riess: Who was the gardener? What was his name?

Gump: Barney Harold.

Riess: And he was a member of the band?

Gump: Oh, certainly, he was one of the founders with me. He wouldn't come up here to town to join the union. He was a bass player.

Riess: He's not listed as one of the personnel, though.

Gump: No, he can't be. For Victor [RCA], he wasn't there, and also for that other recording. What was the name of that company? [Barbary Coast Records]

Well, I'll tell you about the German band anyway. I thought it was a good idea to have this silliness attached to my name because art can become very stuffy, and taste can be a very stuffy thing. I destroyed that attitude, I think. I think I did more harm than good, as a matter of fact. People will always remember me for the German band instead of for serious music.

San Francisco Symphony Board

Gump: For instance, I was at the table with Edo de Waart, the guy leaving the Symphony, and the present conductor, [Herbert] Blomstedt. The two of them were at the table. And one of the other persons who happened to be at the table said, "How are you doing with the German band?" He doesn't know me as a serious musician.

Quite a few years ago I used to sit in the first row at the Opera. I liked it because I could look down at the musicians. I looked right at the conductor because it curves. But one time I got a first row seat on the right side which was terrible because all the percussion and brass is over there. On the left side you have all the strings. That's where I was, finally. Anyway, now I'm going to get tickets for the Opera when I want them.

Riess: Rather than being a season person?

Gump: Yes. I did get the season tickets for the Symphony because my attorney wants tickets. So I was able to get very good seats, as far as I know. I think the Davies place is not too good for sound.

Riess: Where do you like to sit there?

Gump: Well, I'm going to see how the seats are downstairs. I've heard that's the best.

Riess: Do you sit quite close to the front also for the Symphony?

Gump: I understand from the eighth to the twentieth rows are the best downstairs. Of course, there's no aisle down the center. It's insane. That's awful. One time I got in the wrong place. It was a big fashion show by Yves St. Laurent, some benefit for the Symphony or something. Brayton and I got on the wrong side and had to walk across all these people. The idea was it would make more room for the people walking in front. They're absolutely crazy, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. They ought to "skid" out of the place; they're terrible.

You see, what happened on that as far as I know--maybe this is correct or not--they heard that [Avery] Fisher Hall in New York had excellent sound. And so they got the same acoustician [Theodore J. Schultz]. They didn't know that with Fisher Hall it had to all be changed. They spent something like $10 million--now you can check all this--to correct it. But in San Francisco they got the same lousy acoustics.

Gump: Acoustics are like air conditioning. There are all sorts of theories and they work it out by all kinds of formulas. It never works. It's just trial and error, it ends up. It's the same thing with air conditioning, you know. They have all kinds of trouble with that. "It should work," but it's just a computer that says so.

Riess: Were you involved with the Performing Arts Center yourself?

Gump: No, I wasn't.

Riess: When you became a member of the Symphony's Board of Governors [1981] what were the issues being discussed in meetings then?

Gump: We knew that we needed that new hall because the Symphony couldn't rehearse. It was more for the Opera because the Opera needed their own hall. The Symphony used to go in when the Opera wasn't playing, and then the Opera couldn't have their own rehearsals, you see. They even enlarged it in the back. They have a scene dock in there, too. They spent a lot of money on it but it's worth it because they can trade those scenes from certain operas with other opera companies.

Riess: When you were on the board was there a particular interest that you had that you pursued?

Gump: All I pursued is they get money from me. [chuckles] I mean, Brayton Wilbur—he got money from me. I said to him, "I'll leave a lot of money in my will to the Symphony if you perform this work of mine." That was a little blackmail. I told him to forget it. Finally it turned out that Mrs. [Joachim] Bechtle, who's going to be president in November, she finally got [Michael] Steinberg to see me, which is going to be on the 8th of September. He recommends certain works to the conductor because he [Blomstedt] can't be looking at all these works. He's concentrating on what he's going to do. So Steinberg is more or less the censor, whatever it is you want to call it.

Riess: Screening things.

Gump: Yes, screening for new works. So finally, after a year and a half, he's going to look at this work of mine based on King Lear, solo cello, etc.

Riess: Is it fully orchestral?

Gump: Of course, for full orchestra. In fact I told them at Cal, "You're not getting any more money from me for my place in the South Seas unless you perform that." That's the UC Symphony.

The people at the Symphony realized I was someone who knew something about music. Members of the board don't necessarily know a lot about music.

Gump: The funny thing is that the Wilburs--Brayton Wilbur, Jr. was the president of the Symphony and Judy Wilbur was president of the Asian Art Museum, which I was also interested in. So I went to their house quite often. I would think I was there for Symphony people, then I'd find out that I'm there for the Asian Art thing!

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Gump: This woman Nancy Bechtle gave me a lift home the other day. I got on the subject of the Conservatory and how wonderful that auditorium [Hellman Hall] is, and she said, "Well, you know, my family paid for that." I said, "Oh." She's the daughter of Marco Hellman III, whom I knew very well actually. In fact, I went to school with him. I went to Grant School with him.

Richard Gump's King Lear

Riess: You said the UC Symphony did a performance of your King Lear?

Gump: Yes. The UC Symphony did it, reading it cold. If you hear it--I could let you have a cassette of it. But I particularly want--see, I wrote two other scores for that same idea. That was the third attempt at this subject of King Lear. I didn't like the others. This was the third one and I thought, well, if those--the reason I did that wasn't to hear it but just to make sure. I was going to throw it out the window--the hell with this subject after the third time. But after I heard it I thought, "This is pretty good. I'll keep it, I'll go ahead and do it."

I'm pretty sure if the San Francisco Symphony doesn't do it I can get the Santa Barbara Symphony to do it. I'm pretty sure. The cellist lives in Santa Barbara, and I met him in of all places the American Consulate in Florence. He was there with another fellow; they were traveling through Europe.

Riess: It's a cello concerto?

Gump: No, it doesn't have more than one movement, it's a tone poem. Actually a great composer said, "What do you call it?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "I say call it a tone poem."

Riess: What will you present to Steinberg then? The cassette?

Gump: Yes, the cassette with the score.

Riess: When you give a piece of music to the Symphony to perform, do they have any rights to edit or arrange the music at all themselves?

Gump: No. They would have to go over it with me.

I've got some changes I want to make on the original after hearing it. Some things are too slow and some too fast. I'll give you an idea. I use a bassoon to describe the Fool. That's a very important character in King Lear, as you know, because he's a philosopher, soothsayer, and clown, all three. So I have the two bassoons playing in different themes, you see. The one bassoon with the clown is written at the wrong speed in my score, which I'll tell Steinberg right away. It's written so that it sounds [begins to hum tempo, syncopated and moderate], something like that. But I realized it should be double time so it would sound like a clown [humming rhythm again, speeds up tempo], like that, on the bassoon particularly.

The bassoon has one line in there when King Lear says toward the end, "They'll kill my fool." I use something that I don't think has been done. I absolutely choke. On the bassoon when you press your lips hard it makes it go sharp. And so it's just as if the rope's around his neck. But that didn't come out on the cassette because they just played right through it, you see. Then also the various daughters have their own instruments. For instance, one of the daughters, Goneril I think it is, or Regan--I'm not sure which one--. [siren starts wailing on street outside] (That's going to be fine on the tape. That's my audience screaming!)

Riess: Do you think that the University Symphony did a good job on it?

Gump: I asked them because I got to know Glen Grant in the Chancellor's Office quite well, because he went down to the South Seas on the idea about giving that property to UC.* I said, "You can do me a great favor." [referring to the UC Symphony performance of King Lear]

Maestro Dominick Argento who is head of the music department of the University of Minnesota, he is a very famous composer. Boosey and Hawkes, the famous publishers of music, do everything he writes. He had written an opera based on Casanova which will be performed in Washington early next year. He's the one who said, "You have to call it something. Call it a tone poem." Also he was who told me that any orchestra composed of members of a university like the University of Minnesota would be able to play it right off.

That's why I asked Glen Grant about that. I said, "First I want to hear what they do." So he put on a cassette of the UC Symphony playing Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Sacre du Printemps. In my work there's a place where I have a synthesizer part, very

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*See Appendices.

Gump: bass. It's to be played very low and be very loud. You can have all the double basses in the world and they can only play up to certain decibels. But if you use a synthesizer--I think they did the recording in the gym over at Cal and for the synthesizer part they had a guy play the organ, which was all right.

I remember, speaking of that recording, calling my copyist from Bad Gadstein—I was there in the snow--and I asked him about how it was coming. He said he had a lot of people working for him, doing the parts. You can't just write out the score and not have the parts. So evidently the thing works very well. I said, "You'd better be sure they tie up. How are you going to know until they've played it through?" Anyway, it seems to be okay. If there's some part that's lousy I'll blame the copyist. I won't say it's my music when Steinberg hears it.

Oh, there's another thing that's problematic. There are some pizzicato violins in there that have to be entirely different. That can't go on. And another thing, the solo cello--I have a long solo, when he first speaks--it's about a minute and a half long, the cello alone. I need another one, not that long, maybe half that long, for the cello alone, again. He hasn't got the cello alone often enough. Although he has a lot of playing all through the thing.

Riess: What person does the cello represent?

Gump: King Lear. And the various daughters are represented by--I'll give it to you. [Gump shows Riess his program notes for <u>King Lear</u>.] We can make a photostat of these.

Riess: Oh. Let me just read it quickly into the tape recorder, and then you don't have to make a photostat. "I attempt to give the mood of early England in the opening of my tone poem based on <u>King Lear</u>. Lear is the solo cello. The toadying sisters, Goneril (clarinet) and Regan (oboe), sing pleasing flattery to the senile monarch. But the sincere character of his daughter Cordelia is expressed in true, simple devotion in plain, unadorned melody (alto flute). This infuriates Lear, but she is defended by Earl of Kent who is heard throughout (French horn). The Fool is depicted by the bassoon in his many moods of joy, soothsayer, and philosopher. The listener can do his own imagining of the various conflicts and the King's wild reactions to his surroundings. As in the play, towards the end Lear becomes sane and begs Cordelia's pardon. After this touching duet he once more regains his royal bearing before his final struggle and quiet death."

"Further note: I have avoided the secondary plot and only tried to give in music the principal dramatic situations in what many believe to be Shakespeare's greatest play. Richard Gump."

Gump: And then you have a note here on April 8, 1982: "Maestro [Michael] Senturia shows a fine command of the UC orchestra in this first recording, as Jeffrey Rutkowski gives a very sensitive rendition on the solo cello."

Let me add to that that Rutkowski does work out of Santa Barbara, where he lives. And I must mention that Boris Blinder, who never gives out compliments, he said, "Oh, you have a very good cellist here." Literally I've never heard him say anybody was any good, except Boris. So I had a really tough guy say it's very well done. That's why I don't care whether the San Francisco Symphony does it, but they should get Rutkowski to do it because he worked like hell on it. It's not easy, you know. He missed one cue--he came in one little place too soon, but that's nothing. I worked out piano arrangements and everything else for him to work with.

Seven Variations on an American Theme

Riess: Well, would you say it's your most major work?

Gump: The Seven Variations is major. That's a much bigger orchestra. In King Lear I cut out the trombones and the cellos. The reason for that is the low notes of the horn sound very primitive. When you hear the opening you'll see right away. I know they sound awful rough, the low notes alone. The horn plays very low and a lot of people don't use it that low.

Riess: Your major work, Seven Variations on an American Theme, was performed in Marin, in Sacramento, Honolulu, Fort Wayne.

Gump: Is Oakland on that list? Oakland did it also. You've heard of Oakland, haven't you?

Riess: Yes, I've heard of Oakland.

Gump: People talk about Auckland, New Zealand, I think they're talking about Oakland. When you're down in the South Seas it's very funny. Is Oakland in there?

Riess: No, it doesn't mention that Oakland also performed it. This was all in the mid-fifties. Has it continued to be performed?

Gump: I haven't given it out. The Seven Variations on an American Theme--I won't tell you what the theme is until you hear it. I'll play it for you. I made some pressings; there are records of that, with the Honolulu Symphony. [George] Barati did a marvelous job of conducting them. George Barati is known here because he played in

Gump: the cello section of the Symphony quite a few years ago. Boris says, "How can he conduct?" But actually he was an excellent conductor.

[Telephone interruption]

Riess: Did you ever consider doing anything under a different name?

Gump: Yes, I did when I was young because in those days you couldn't use Anglo-Saxon names. I remember that instead of "Richard Gump" I was trying to use Giovannovic or some name like that, to sound Polish or Russian or German which was always very popular in the thirties or twenties. Nobody liked to use a name like--for instance, one of the heads of the Metropolitan Opera whose name was Edward Johnson--he was made director of the Met [1935-1950]. He was a tenor. But he was one of the first guys to use an Anglo-Saxon name, an Anglicized name.* I thought of funny names. But I don't know what that's got to do with your question.

Riess: Well, my question is whether you tried to hide the fact that you were Richard Gump.

Gump: No, I didn't. But when I was introduced, or in the program notes, it'd always say, "The designer for Gump's," or "The president of Gump's," whatever. Whatever happened to come along. They would usually say that because it lends more color. It doesn't lend color to my music, it lends more color to the personality.

Riess: Right.

Gump: In the Seven Variations I used everything but the kitchen sink in that one. There have to be three bassoons, clarinets--bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet--there are all these various instruments. Most symphony orchestras have all those, you see.

Riess: "The Gift of December?"

Gump: That's male choir. Schirmer published that, but I don't think they promoted that.

Riess: Did you make money on your music?

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*Edward Johnson, a Canadian tenor and manager, debuted in Padua in 1912 as "Eduardo di Giovanni," according to Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1964.

Gump: No. Well, Mrs. Graham could tell you that. I got a check for $3.57 for something that was played in Japan. There's one popular tune--Jim, who works for me, used to ship out on the Matson Lines, and he said, "My God, I learned to close my ears to that Hawaiian music." They play an awful lot of it.

Riess: That's the "My Tane?" [See p. 73]

Gump: Yes.

C Model Steinway

Gump: Here's a funny story: a friend of mine in Hollywood was doing a movie. I knew the leading lady quite well. In fact "well" is putting it mildly, she was my girlfriend. Anyway, I wrote this thing about gauchos on the Pampas, you know. It was a tango. They said that's fine but I had to change it into a Legionnaires' March overnight! I did! See, it was funny. All that, "Drroomp, dum/da-dum, dum." [humming the rhythm] That's the tango. You have to be [humming again] "Drroomp-2-3-4." The real tango, emphasis on the downbeat.

Harry Rebel, who was a famous songwriter--"Love in Bloom" is one of the things he wrote. He wrote a lot of big hits, Rebel and Gordon. Anyway, Harry Rebel was over at my place. I saw how he placed the bass emphasis on the piano. I learned that from him. I just watched how he did it.

I can show you on that one [referring to his piano]. It's a marvelous piano. It's a sacrilege to play that sort of stuff on it. I think it is one of the best pianos in the world. It's the C Model [Steinway], which is the next size before the concert grand. The concert grand is nine feet, this is seven foot one. There's no point in having a concert grand.

Riess: The C Model Steinway.

Gump: Yes. It's made in Hamburg. This fellow Fenton from here goes over and picks out certain ones. He can hear the difference because he tunes them all the time. That's included in the price, which is high as hell. But it's worth it because I play it and I think I'm awfully good. That thing is marvelous for tone. I'll play a few notes for you.

Riess: Fenton, the fellow who bought it for you, who is he?

IMPORTANT COMPOSITIONS BY RICHARD GUMP, AND THEIR PERFORMANCES

Polynesian Impression	Honolulu Symphony, Dec. 19, 1940 Oakland Symphony, May 10, 1942
Clarinet Quintet	Music Lovers Society of San Francisco
Violin and Piano Sonata	California Composers Forum, Dec. 9, 1941
Sonata for Oboe and Piano	Schipilitti and William Grant Still, concert in Southern California. Also in private performances as an oboe quintet. Merrill Remington and a string quartet of the San Francisco Symphony
The Gift of December (cantata for male choir)	Uda Waldrup and male choristers, Palace Hotel, San Francisco, Dec. 14, 1948; Loring Club, SF, Dec. 1949, 1951, 1957; Indiana University, Dec. 1949; Oakland Orpheus Concert, Aug. 16, 1952. Published by G. Schirmer, Inc., Nov. 1977
Seven Variations on an American Theme (symphony)	Symphony Guild Orchestra of Marin, CA, Gastone Usigli, Nov. 22, 1953; Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra, Fritz Berens, Nov. 19, 1954; Honolulu Symphony Orch., George Barati, Mar. 15, 1955, July 4, 1957; Fort Wayne Philharmonic Orchestra, Igor Buketoff, Nov. 15, 1955.
Fantasia for Four Hands	Milton and Peggy Salkind at San Francisco Museum of Art, Mar. 10, 1954, and other occasions since. Pacific Musical Society San Francisco Jan. 1956.
Nocturne at Angkor Wat (string quartet)	Honolulu String Quartet, early 1941
Safari (string quartet)	
Quintet for Oboe and Strings	

Come Vere the Band Ist Playing, RCA Victor LPM 1721, released 7/1/58

Drink Mein Liebling Dein Bier, RCA Victor LPM 1453, released 7/1/57

My Tane (My Man), a Tahitian Love Song, by August Goupil, Dick Gump, and Johnny Noble, published 1934

Under a Spreading Coconut Tree, Decca Records

Impressions from Many Lands, Reflection Records, 1976

Brief statement:

"Depending upon the occasion, I have written in the twelve-tone scale and sometimes in classic harmony. It depends upon the audience and what form I consider the best for what I am trying to express.

"I believe in using American melodic line, harmony and rhythm as thematic material, much as composers in other countries have used their native idiom for their schools of music, but never to make this obvious as Brahms never made his use of the Hungarian idiom too obvious. To me, a poor use of American themes is the "Rhapsody in Blue" in which the idiom controls the composition. In this same token, many of Liszt's Hungarian rhapsodies are romantic school examples of the Hungarian themes controling the composition.

"There are times when my works are easily composed, such as the second movement to my 'Violin and Piano Sonata' which was written in twelve hours; on the other hand, the third movement to the same work took three months. I believe that an entire composition can never be wholly an inspiration but is a series of inspirations interspersed with hard work and technical skill. I don't believe that any music that is written seriously is either good or bad. It all depends upon the reaction of the listener. For we never can tell which works will eventually be great . . . . Aren't we all too close to the trees to see the forest?"

-- Richard Gump

Gump: He lives here. He has Rubinstein's piano that he had in Hollywood, you know, in southern California, the one he left there. He has that. And I think he's getting the piano that Gershwin had. His business is he goes over to Germany about once or twice a year and picks out the best one. They only make about ten or twelve of that model per year in Hamburg.

I have another piano, an upright. Some of the workers left the Steinway factory in Germany and started their own little company called Steinweg, which means Steinway in German: "weg" is "way." And I have one of those uprights in Florence. It's a wonderful little piano, a terrific piano. This [C model] is very loud. That's the only trouble.

Riess: Well, it certainly is a beautiful thing. I wish you would play it for me.

Gump: I mentioned certain things. I can show you what I'm talking about. I can't play well, but I can show you that bass very easily.

Riess: Well, the woman who's transcribing these tapes is a musician herself, so she'll do well.

Gump: Yes, but she can't write the music.

Riess: But she can go "oomph-pa" periodically!

Gump: Oh, I see. "Drroomp-2-3-4." [laughs]

The Boys in the Guckenheimer Band

Riess: Yes. I hate to leave your serious side and go to the Guckenheimers, but I want to hear about that music too. The date you started was 1949?

Gump: Yes, and I said earlier about how we happened to get started.

Riess: You happened to get started, but how did you gather your gang together?

Gump: Well, we asked this one guy who was working for us over there across the bay [Sausalito] when I had the place there. He knew a few people around Marin. So we got fellows living particularly in Sausalito and Marin County. There was Paul Faria, just up to see me the other day. He's a professional musician.

Riess: [reading caption of picture] "Interior designer of Gump's and leader of his own (non-Guckenheimer sounding) dance band."

Gump: That's right, that's correct. So he's really a professional musician as well as playing this nonsense. It was very good having him.

You see, we were asked to make a record by RCA Victor. What happened was the first clarinet was late. He [Paul Faria] called up everybody to be there and then he didn't show up in time down at the union here, Local 6. So we played a number without our first clarinet. I said, "Well, our first clarinet is missing." "We don't care; that's bad enough that you can get in the union anyway. Seems to be typical of the German village band. That's all right, we don't need him." So he wasn't immortalized in the union, although he belonged, naturally, because he was a professional musician.

Riess: You had three clarinets, two cornets, one flugelhorn, one tuba, one drum, one trombone. Is this modeled on anything else?

Gump: Well, I'll tell you what it's modeled on. Years ago there was an enormous nightclub in Berlin before the Nazis took over. And one of the bands was a Bavarian group. You see, they had all these various groups. They had a western one. Various countries that had typical music. They had it in this great big Vaterland Place. That's the name of the nightclub. And it was an enormous building.

Riess: It was called the Vaterland?

Gump: Yes, Fatherland. I think it was Kempinski who owned it. He was a big hotel owner there. But anyway, when I was there I saw the little fat guy playing an E-flat clarinet and I thought, "Gee, that's amusing." So when my mother-in-law suggested to do a German band, I right away pictured that and figured out how to make music that way.

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Gump: We got so good—I'll tell you this much--that the top music critic in Britain, he heard that we had this band down here--he was up in Vancouver--and he came down here especially to review us. Just by luck we were rehearsing the evening he came down. We were rehearsing in the store, you see, in our Porcelain Room.

Riess: Yes, that's what I read. I couldn't believe that you would rehearse in those rooms!

Gump: Well, there was nobody there, of course. It's after hours.

Riess: I know, but you would shatter the china.

Gump: Yes, probably. Maybe we did, I don't know.

Gump: Anyway, he came down there and he interviewed me. So I put on this fake German accent. Not too exaggerated because that makes it stupid. But I acted as if—I said [imitating German accent], "You know, what we're doing is very important and you're telling the public and the world as a great critic that we're immortalizing a dying art form. That's what we're doing, we're immortalizing it." And I went over that nonsense very seriously, you know, what great music we were preserving for posterity and all that stuff. And he was interviewing me straight.

It was on BBC just before Christmas that year. And he said you would be surprised. People called up and said, "What a terrible thing to have!" "A stupid German on the air," and all that. And he said the funny thing is that the people who didn't know music thought it was terrible. But he said that the great musicians in Britain all called him up and told him how wonderful it was. The musicians thought it was a great gag. His name was Jacobs, a very nice fellow. He told me that later when I was in London. I called him on the phone and found out this about the interview. Maybe I can get that, through BBC or something. I'd like to have it here.

Sour, But Strict

Riess: So you've always been a little "off" in all of the performances. That was always the way you would do it?

Gump: Yes. Well, the two clarinets weren't tuned properly. [hums a tune] You know that, it's a famous song.

Riess: [sings the lyrics to the song] "When you are in love..."

Gump: Yes, that's the one. Well, we purposely tuned the two clarinets off and they were playing it in thirds, or in two-and-a-halfs, I guess, whatever it is. Though it's very sentimental, see, when you have this duet.

I did a lot of the arranging of the band. It was very easy to do. I knew how to take a piano score and transform it into our band very quickly. I'm no genius, I just had a method of doing it.

But the whole trick in our band was this—I'll tell you. They try to do this German band stuff and it doesn't come over. The whole point is you have to keep even tempo. Or ritardando, whatever; a rit, if you want. (A writ [laughs] of habeas corpus, I guess.) Anyway, if you have a slower or an increased speed it has to be very exact. The downbeat has to be very exact. Because that's very German, see. Any village band would be exact on that. Going sour doesn't matter. And that's the most important part. If

Gump: we didn't have exact tempo and we weren't really hitting on the beat we'd sound like a miserable high school orchestra playing for a third-rate football team.

Riess: How much did you rehearse? Was it a big part of your life?

Gump: Oh, we rehearsed quite a bit. I remember one guy--I got to know him because he's a member of the same club that I'm a member of. I saw him again recently. He couldn't show up once; there was this tv program he didn't want to miss. I said, "Okay, you won't miss that, but you'll be out of the band." The guy was a very good trumpet player. He was one of the original trumpeters for Horace Heidt's band. I told him, "Well, then, you're not in our band if you couldn't make it. It's hard enough to get these guys together, and then you can't make it. The hell with it." So he wasn't a member of the band anymore. Then he bumped into some members of the German band and he said, "I was so embarrassed." Isn't that a shame? I had to be very strict. [German accent]

See, what we did--we played the thing straight through perfectly, just reading it cold. Then I would tell them, "Now do this and that and the other. Ritard in here a little bit, and let's go over that. Let's bring out the clarinets here and the next refrain we'll repeat with the trumpets." They were all arranged that way. This group and that group, etc. That's what we rehearsed. I'd tell them what I wanted. You can't have ten people deciding what the tempo is going to be and what the dynamics are. I had to express that. Not that I knew more than other guys, but one person has to tell them.

Riess: Sure, you were the conductor. It was your thing. You were Guckenheimer and the rest of them were all Schmidt.

Gump: Have you got the stationery I made?

Riess: Yes, I have it.

Gump: Well, you can see what that is. I found some of the funniest names in the phone book. I looked up "Sch." A friend of mine, she said, "That's an awful thing to do. Remember what the Germans did to the Jews." I felt rather embarrassed. I didn't think that it would be insulting, you know. It had nothing to do with that madman Hitler.

But we played for something--they wanted to save the cable cars, so we played in the Fairmont Hotel lobby. And we got some old refugees coming up saying [imitating German accent], "Oh, that's so wonderful [dat's so vunderful]. We haven't heard that kind of music since we left Vienna (or we left Salzburg). We heard the wonderful sound of the peasants playing there. Oh, that brings back fond memories."

160a

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Gump: "Nostalgic nonsense" would be a wonderful way of putting it--naming another record. I had the rights for three records for RCA Victor. We made two records for them. They didn't do very well; we only sold about 30,000, I think, on the first one.

Riess: Well, that's very good, isn't it?

Gump: I don't know. No, not in the record business when they could spend a lot of time--the same guys who do all that popular stuff recorded our stuff. In fact, as it says on the jacket of the record, they put the sound machine up in our Steuben Room, and then we played on the first floor, recording.

Riess: Who found the costumes for the band?

Gump: I found them in various places. Like the trombone player's was from a military school uniform. He had only to take the peak off to look like a German from the First World War. He had a washer up here for the insignia they used to have on the cap. Mine was a wonderful one. My jacket was way too short. That came from a Japanese admiral. One of our buyers picked it up in the Orient. It had a lot of wonderful embroidery on it. My helmet was a beautiful job from Bavaria with a Bavarian insignia--you can always tell it, the insignia--on the helmet itself. Also one of them had the uhlan--the horse rider, you know, it's this square thing on the top. And you turn it over to give the horse water.

Riess: What is the word?

Gump: Uhlan, it's the cavalry of the German army. They all had spears, of course, in those days, at the beginning of the First World War. And then they found that it didn't do much good, they killed all the horses right away. The funniest one--the trombone player had a pair of pants that fit perfectly on him. They were from an Indian viceroy. Those pants were from about 1820. If you look on the record cover you'll see him wearing them. They were a brilliant red.

Good Times

Riess: Why did the Guckenheimers come to an end?

Gump: Finally we didn't have much more to do. We could have, but I had stopped working on it. I guess it's more my fault.

One of the guys who was the funniest guy in the bunch, the fellow who played the flugelhorn, Dick Hiatt--you have the inscription there--unfortunately he died recently. God, he was

Gump: funny. I'll tell you how I know he was funny. Say we were playing for an opening of a Gump: market or something down in Palo Alto, when it was over and we would be breaking up and the band was walking out the little kids, maybe two, three, or five, six, eight years old, all would point to him and say, "Oh, he's the funny man! He's the funny man!" God, the guy is an absolute character! He was very talented.

Riess: He was an architect?

Gump: Yes, that's right. And he also painted very well. He understood the arts very well. A very sensitive guy, and God, he was funny. I told you about how he'd get the trombone player laughing so much because he couldn't play the darned flugelhorn properly. He was a good musician.

When he was around seventeen years old he played viola in the San Francisco Symphony. I think it says it in there. But he couldn't play the flugelhorn properly. His lips weren't set for it. He had never practiced the darned instrument. He wanted to play certain notes and he would go like this [gesture], and they didn't come out the way he wanted, see. But it sounded wonderful. So the trombone player would get laughing. And I'd say, "Stop the orchestra." Even during our concerts, so called. "Wait a minute! If you want to laugh we do it in unison. We do everything in unison here now. We laugh in unison. None of this individuality with the laughter!"

I went on like that. "All right, now we have our laugh: 'Ha, ha, ha, ha.' Fine! Now it's all in unison, it's fine. Now you've got the laugh out of you; now you get down to our serious music."

There was one girl we heard sing. She had a wonderful voice. She was the daughter of the British consul, I think it was. She lived over in Ross, I think. After I heard her sing I made a special arrangement for her with the band backing her up. Of course, her voice has changed completely because that was when she was around ten. A very cute, pretty little girl, and she was very nice. There was a big garden thing over in Marin County. I wrote the band background for her. It came out very well.

It doesn't matter how badly we played because it sounded very natural. But we had to be on the beat and not get mixed up. Because that's stupid, it's not funny anymore.

Riess: What did you do with the money that you brought in?

Gump: I divided it amongst the players.

Riess: But you actually took the money.

Gump: Well, certainly. We belonged to the union, we had to. We never played for nothing.

There are so many different places we played. We went up to Tahoe and we ended up in Virginia City with a duel between the tuba and the trombone in the main street about two in the morning, playing notes at each other and then answering, like they were dueling in the center of the street.

Riess: You must have had the best time!

Gump: Well, it was a lot of fun.* The other stuff--you can get all keyed up about serious music and that stuff. I knew how to put it over.

"Trink Dein Bier"

Gump: There's one thing that was very interesting, from the psychiatric point of view. I'd find myself singing. "Trink mein liebling dein Bier." That's when I had a wonderful heldentenor. I'd hit a high A, you see. And I couldn't talk the next day. My voice was worse than it is now.

This psychiatric thing. I told my psychiatrist, Dr. Norman Reider--he's world-famous, one of the top psychiatrists in the U.S.--I told him about it. I said, "You know, when I want approval I find myself mentally singing this number. Because every time I did it, it would bring the house down." Because it sounds so awful. (We put it on a 45 record, you know, the small record. ["Sour Kraut in Hi-Fi" for RCA] And it's also on a bigger one.) But it sounds awful.

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*Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band played numerous engagements over the years, three record albums, tv shows such as Arthur Godfrey, Ernie Ford, Arlene Francis' "Today Show," etc., grand openings of banks, art and garden fairs, holiday celebrations, winery celebrations, Oktoberfest, Monterey Music Festival, San Francisco Opera social engagements, Fol-de-Rol, etc., a presidential convention, and many worthwhile charity fundraisers. The commercial engagements were booked for at least the Union rates. The charity performances were at no charge. The Band donated its services for many years for special performances at the Salvation Army Christmas parties, Laguna Honda Home, and Childrens' Hospital. In some instances where the performances were not to be considered charity but a good civic cause, the Union would sponsor the engagement and pay the band from the Union transcription fund, which was established for worthwhile civic and charitable causes. [Paul Faria, business manager of the band.]

Gump: I've sung some other stuff. For instance, we do the "Stars and Stripes Forever" in German. I sing words that don't mean anything but they sound German. You have these German people saying, "It's wonderful the way he's singing it, but I don't get that German. I don't understand." It isn't anything. [recites some of the fake German lyrics] They think there's something wrong with their hearing aid!

Riess: Was there a singing part in every one for you?

Gump: No, not every one. Just the last one. If you look at the recording you can find out.

Riess: What I was looking up before was the name of this song, "Trink mein liebling." Is that actually the name of the song?

Gump: Yes.

Riess: Would you say it again slowly?

Gump: "Trink, mein liebling, dein Bier."

Riess: Yes. "Drink your beer, sweetie."

Gump: "Ein, Zwei, Drei, und auf Vier. Forget all your troubles and deine Schmerz. Dein ist mein ganzes herz." That's all. "Bury your nose in the foam. We will never go home. Darling Gesundheit and Cheerio, Liebling I love you so!"

Riess: Oh, it's wonderful!

Gump: That was my big hit. But the thing is, that was always a big hit. I find when I'm looking for approval, you know, outside my own home, I find myself mentally singing that. It's a very interesting psychiatric thing, association.

I don't want to spend too much time on the German band except it's an interesting thing. That's why the people say, "How's the German band?" They never say, "How's the music getting along?"

Classical DJ

Riess: I've read that Gump's sponsored opera broadcasts over the years.

Gump: Yes. Not over the years, just certain years. And it was classical music, not opera.

Riess: On one of the radio stations?

Gump: Yes. I was the first classical music disc jockey.

Riess: You were, for one of the radio stations?

Gump: Yes. Well, we paid for it. I did the work with another announcer, the two of us together. I talked very stupidly. The funny thing--my sister said, "That's terrible what you're doing." And I said, "Oh, is that so?"

One time I was just leaving to play golf from the store and I got a telephone call from Mrs. Koshland, one of the biggest backers of the Symphony. She called and said, "Mr. Gump, I wanted you to know how wonderful that program you have is." It always ended at midnight, that one hour from 11:00-12:00. "I can go to sleep by it. It's so wonderful, so amusing, too. You make some remarks about classical music that are so good." And here's a woman who devoted her life to that. In fact, she backed Yehudi Menuhin, I think, when he was just a kid.

So I told my sister that evidently it's going over. You can't have the approval of anybody who's done more for music in this town.

[Telephone rings]

Then we sponsored KKHI. We had that for two hours on Sundays. I told them I didn't want any interruptions. Then I would call them up and raise hell with them because there was something on and I couldn't figure it out. It was Beethoven but I couldn't recognize what it was. And it was the overture--it's very well-known, I'll tell you later—plus all the other incidental music to the same great play by Goethe that Beethoven wrote the background music to.

Riess: You mentioned Mrs. Koshland and Menuhin. When you were growing up did you know Yehudi Menuhin or any of the brilliant young musicians here?

Gump: No. Well, just before the war I met Isaac Stern. He had made it or was just about ready to make it in '41. That's another person she helped, I think. But let's check and make sure about Yehudi.

I had dinner with him and his wife at my attorney's home. He knows who I am. I said, "I have a sonata for piano and violin that maybe you might like to play." He said, "Well, leave the music at the Mark Hopkins." I did, but I never heard from him. I know he's not rude, so maybe the hall porter who I gave it to at the Mark didn't give it to him. That's all right; I don't care.

The Gumps and Asian Art

Gump: I bought these books on Baroque architecture printed in Austria just this year in Vienna. And I found an amazing coincidence. The Gumps were a family of designers. They were very famous around Innsbruck. In fact, I had my picture taken on the Gumpstrasse. (It's Gumpp in German. I don't know how you pronounce the double pp in German. Of course Gump, nobody can pronounce the name right anyway.)

But anyway, I found that they did some Oriental influence, decoration, in a little pagoda in the garden of a castle. I think it's in the garden of Nymphenburg Castle. The Gumps were influential with Oriental stuff back for the King of Bavaria! That's a funny coincidence. Maybe it's in the blood. I don't know.

Riess: It was definitely an influence in San Francisco. If one were to do the history of the Asian Art Museum would you say that you would have to begin with your father's imports?

Gump: Oh, yes, sure. My father and Mr. Newell. In fact Newell told me--he picked out some big jade pieces in Japan. Nobody knew about these big hunks of jade. They knew about the jewelry but not the big decorative pieces. And he picked those up in Japan very cheap. They had them in a bicycle, I think he told me. I've forgotten exactly.

But anyway he brought them in and that's how we started this famous Jade Room. I'll explain that. You see, as things came in they decided they ought to build rooms. That was before the Fair in 1915, as I mentioned earlier. So they built rooms for various things. There was a Lacquer Room. (Not lack of room--we had a lack of room later. [chuckles]) But then we had a Porcelain Room and a Bronze Room, and then a Kimono Room, which was fashion. And we had enough jade there so we had the Jade Room. That's how the Jade Room started, just dividing up subject material. You can't mix them up, which I said earlier was like when the Halls of Kansas City asked me for my opinion about their display and I said, "It's not coordinated." I was brought up with these rooms. We had also a Rug Room there, too. We had all that in our annex down on Post Street.

Riess: So that's how the Jade Room came to be.

Gump: Yes, the title itself. Then we had two of them because so many people wanted to see it that we finally closed the better stuff and showed them the stuff that's on the outside now. Now they've got both of them open. They're crazy to do that, because there's no exclusivity to going into the Inner Jade Room.

Riess: There are a couple of names that I've come across in the history of local interest in Asian art. One person was Ching Wah Lee. He had taught some classes and had a shop.

Gump: Yes. What about him?

Riess: Well, I just wondered—and Rudolf Schaeffer--I wonder whether these people influenced your interest in Asian art.

Gump: No. I inherited the interest. That is very important to say, that I inherited this interest in Oriental art. My mother enjoyed it a great deal. Because, you see, Mr. Newell had this little shop in Chinatown. My mother went in there and he told her how interesting these things were, and the fact that they influenced Whistler. They influenced various great painters of the day. She found it fascinating, and he was a very fascinating person. So she told me she literally got on bended knees begging my father to hire Newell after the earthquake, which he finally did. Newell was about to go over to Shreve's. Anyway, he joined us in 1907 until his retirement in the '40s. It was he who got us into Oriental art in conjunction with Occidental art. (I don't know whether it was Occidental or on purpose right now. [laughs])

Riess: And Avery Brundage used to come into the shop?

Gump: Oh, yes, sure. Why not?

Riess: Was his interest developed here in San Francisco?

Gump: I don't think so, necessarily. It might have been. It might have been through us, although one-half of my jade book is Avery Brundage carvings. We purposely tried to make it as much San Francisco as possible. But I don't know if we got him interested in Oriental art.

He also had some Etruscan things. I saw a whole bunch of the stuff he had piled up in the attic of a hotel that he owns in Chicago, on LaSalle Street. I looked at these iron things and I didn't want to ask him, because it sounds so stupid, I wanted to say, "Are those Etruscan?" I don't know where those things are now. They wouldn't be in an Oriental place. They're very rare Etruscan iron pieces he picked up. They're quite valuable and interesting.

Riess: The people who were collecting Oriental art--were they buying it at Gump's? Or were there other places?

Gump: Locally? There were a few in Chinatown. But we had such a vast display of them, in the proper setting. That made a big difference. People could imagine them in an Occidental setting, you see.

Riess: Who in Chinatown was importing comparably fine stuff?

Gump: Well, it wouldn't be comparable because they wouldn't have bought that much. We were able to spend a lot more money than any smaller dealer. We had to have a lot because we had all these rooms.

Riess: So the dealers in Chinatown were always small compared to Gump's.

Gump: Yes, the equivalent of about one room that we had. Size doesn't mean the thing's better because it's bigger. But we had all these things divided up in categories and it made it more interesting.

Riess: Did you ever have any Chinese or Japanese employees in the store?

Gump: Oh, yes, many in various jobs. We also had Chinese girls in costumes running the elevators [until automation].

The granddaughter of Baron Makato Hagiwara, the man who gave the city the Japanese Tea Garden, she worked for us in the store for quite a while. Haruko Hagiwara Matsuishi. She was very amusing. She had a sense of humor. I would speak to her in my broken Japanese and she would have hysterics. I would come up and say something to her in Japanese that was nuts. She would be waiting on a customer and start laughing and say, "You spoiled my sale. I was laughing too much." Of course, the customer wondered what I was saying in Japanese to her. Some silly damn thing.

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Gump: For instance, in Japanese: "Snakes are always naked." I just happened to think of that one. It's a very philosophical saying. [laughs] You know, it's crazy! I would say something like that to her. I picked up Japanese working in Honolulu. The guys working in our shop there making furniture were Japanese.

The Jade Book, and Buddhas

Riess: So in 1962 the jade book was published. Was it based on your lectures?

Gump: No, it was based on jade.

Riess: But what came first?

Gump: I'll explain. The people who did Gump's Treasure Trade, the publisher [Thomas Y. Crowell Company], wrote to me, "We think it might be good if you did a book on jade. But we want to see a sample of your work." So I told Mrs. Graham, "The hell with him. I'm not going to show him a sample of my work. All he has to do is read Good Taste Costs No More and he can see that I can write."

Later on the president of Doubleday [Sergent] was in the store, whom I knew from Good Taste Costs No More. I said, "Listen, would you like me to do a book on jade?" He said, "It sounds like a

Gump: wonderful idea. I would say okay, but don't take that as final because I have to put it through with the board." But anyway, he said, "Certainly, a wonderful idea!" That's how I happened to do it for Doubleday. I was so mad at the other people, I did it for Doubleday.

Riess: Did you do a lot of research for that book?

Gump: Oh, yes, sure. Curt Gentry did research for me. He helped me with the book. He's the one who wrote Helter Skelter. It hit the Book-of-the-Month Club and he made a fortune on that. It's about that crazy family down in Hollywood who killed those people--who was that?

Riess: The Mansons.

Gump: Yes, it was all about the Manson trial. He worked with the D.A. of Los Angeles County.

Riess: How did you get him for the jade book?

Gump: I told Doubleday, "I need somebody to help me, because I'm running the store. See who you can get." So they got him right away. He and I are great friends now.

Riess: You were a member of the Asian Art Society?

Gump: Yes. That was the group that persuaded Brundage to give his collection. Now they can only show about 25 percent of the collection, because he bought so damn much of it. One time I walked in the entrance there and there were all these Indian stone pieces. They were wonderful. I asked Judy Wilbur, the president at the time, "Where did you get these wonderful stone things?" She said, "They're our own. We just brought them out of the basement. There's a whole exhibit. We can pick and choose the best ones and put them in the show. Our own, never shown before." That goes through there a lot. They could use a lot more room.

Riess: You've already given many things to the Asian Museum, haven't you?

Gump: Yes. But I don't want to put that in there. It looks like I'm boasting about being so munificent.

Riess: There is the great Buddha in honor of your father. Is that in the tea garden or in the museum?

Gump: It's in the Japanese Tea Garden. It is to honor the Gump family, my father and his two brothers.

Riess: I don't think it's boasting.

Gump: Well, that gift is okay, but not money. I don't want to mention money.

That big Buddha is a very rare thing. It's a big bronze one, as you know. Somebody stole the halo, whatever they call that around the head. So we had to supply another one, a copy of that which we got from Japan. They don't make them by the dozen. We sent a picture to Japan and had a copy made. It cost quite a bit to do that in bronze. The bronze alone would be worth an awful lot. But I don't want to boast about my gifts.

Epilogue

[A few weeks after this last interview Mr. Gump left for an extended stay in Florence, Italy. While in Florence he edited the oral history transcript. He took the interviewer's request for further information on some subjects to heart and wrote, or dictated to a recorder, thoughtful answers. Those dictations or notes were added in the text. I have included, following, a part of the Florence dictation as epilogue.]

Gump: You wanted a few ideas for titles. One could be "Muddling in the Mud." That would mean not only some of the horrible roads you have to walk but also the mud itself that becomes great porcelain. Who knows?

Another title that might be good is, "Is it worth it?" That could be from the point of view, is this antique worth it? Or is the sweat that we go through to get these antiques worth it? Or is it worth it when you give it to somebody as a present? Do they appreciate it enough? Is the whole thing worth it? Sometimes I wonder if it is. Maybe that's why I sold the place. I got too tired of it. Who knows?

Another theme that everybody knows and that gets in anybody's hair is, "Well now, when you're going over to Europe, will you please look around and see if you can find me a such-and-such." The title being, "Don't forget to get me a such-and-such." And then after you've gotten that such-and-such, your great friend says, "Well, that isn't the color I meant at all, and it's a different weave. And where did you get that? In Thailand? I told you you were supposed to get it over in Iran." Then you explain to them that Iran is not open at the moment. The whole thing gets twisted and the next you know you've lost a friendship because you didn't get the such-and-such. For the rest of your life you call that same person a such-and-such, and for good reason. Sometimes favors work out very, very disadvantageously.

Transcriber and Final Typist: Elizabeth Eshleman

A GALLERY FOR RICHARD GUMP

Mrs. Brayton Wilbur Jr. of Hillsborough does the honors at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco by presenting Richard Gump with a lei during the evening reception marking the opening of The Richard Gump Gallery. Arts of India and the Himalayas will be exhibited in the gallery which pays homage to the man who, like his father before him, has done much over the years to make Californians aware of Asian arts.

The Asian Art Commission

requests the pleasure of the company of

Mr. Richard Gump

for a Reception Honoring

Richard Gump

on

October 3, 1984

at 6 To 8 o'clock

The Richard Gump Gallery

The Arts of India and the Himalayas

Please respond

Asian Art Museum
of San Francisco

Golden Gate Park
California, 94118

SEP 19 1984

RICHARD GUMP'S OFFICE

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These page numbers are guides to listening to the tapes. It has not been practical to indicate all the inserted text. Therefore the listener will find some incongruities between tape and text.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Ken Kojima

AN INTERVIEW WITH KEN KOJIMA

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1988

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

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THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

BUREAU OF CUSTOMS

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

May 22, 1972 REFER TO

Mr. Richard B. Gump
c/o Concierge
The Grand Hotel
Florence, Italy

Dear Mr. Gump:

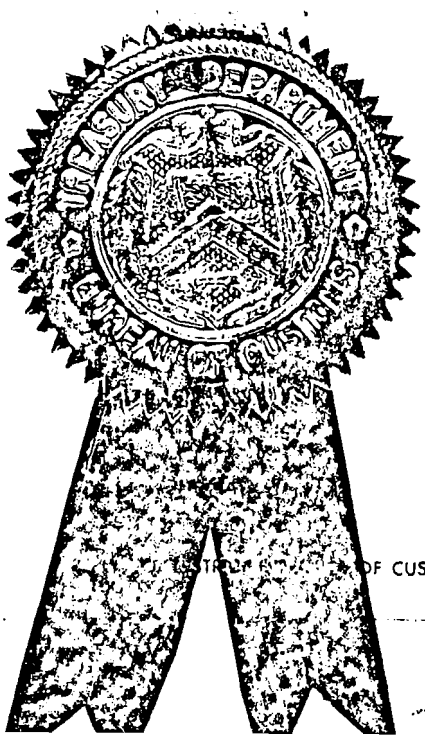
I am writing to thank you for the arrangements you made for Mr. Kenneth S. Kojima, my adviser in the appraisement of imported fine arts and antiques, during his recent visit to Florence, April 29th through May 3rd, making it possible for him to see, firsthand, the makings of reproduction antiques and the restoration of paintings.

Mr. Kojima has assured me that the knowledge he gained during this trip has enhanced his expertise in appraisement and will directly benefit this office. Also, that admittance to all of these shops would have been impossible without your personal introduction.

I want to particularly express my appreciation for your thoughtfulness in assisting Mr. Kojima; and also thank you for the many hours of assistance you have given our staff through the years. Your vast knowledge has been indispensable in helping to carry out our work efficiently.

Sincerely yours,

George K. Brokaw
District Director of Customs



Background and Education*

Riess: Mr. Kojima, why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you got into this business. Where are you from? Where were you born?

Kojima: I'm originally from Los Angeles. I went to high school in the midwest, and college in Washington, D.C.

Riess: How come? That's a story.

Kojima: During the war we were evacuated out of California.

Riess: Your family was not interned in California?

Kojima: We were interned in a camp in Colorado, and then we left from the camp and went east. I ended up in Georgetown.

Mrs. K: You could tell about your family background, like you lost your father in '41 and your mother was by herself with a brood of five. Then you were all interned. You were the youngest boy of the family and went to high school in the midwest.

Kojima: I finished high school in Rockford, Illinois during the war.

Riess: What business was your father in out here?

Kojima: My father did many things. He started a produce exchange in southern California. Then he went into the mining business. He bought a mine near Moab, Utah, and was trying to extract vanadium, which was used in conjunction with hardening steel. But vanadium went out because aluminum was preferred by industries. He died in early 1941.

Riess: And your mother?

Kojima: She was widowed at forty, with five of us, and her only assets were the house and my father's art collection. That was his hobby.

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*Interviewed April 12, 1988.

Mrs. K: I think your first interest probably stemmed from your father's vast collection of samurai swords. He became an expert and was very active in various Japanese sword clubs. He got some publicity on writings that he did for them.

Riess: What was his first name?

Kojima: His initials are J. I. Kojima. He died at the age of ffty-three with peritonitis.

Riess: That was before the camps then?

Kojima: Yes. When he died our finances were very low. My oldest brother was just out of high school, going to college. He had to quit college to work. Then the war came and we were all put into camps. From camp my brother left and got a job on a surveying team in Rockford, Illinois. He then called the rest of the family out there, where I finished high school. I went to college for a year and wasn't a good student. I was going just to go to school. At that time all the World War II veterans were coming back, a very serious group to compete against. In a year I got put on probation, so I joined the army for eighteen months. After service I went to Georgetown in Washington, D.C.

Riess: How could you afford to go there?

Kojima: Well, we had some funds from my father's sword collection so we could go to school.

While I was in Washington, D.C. I boarded with the Halsey sisters. They were unmarried and from upstate New York and New York City. The elder sister, Olga, went to Wellesley and then to the London School of Economics. The younger sister, Marion, went to Smith, then went to Columbia to study Chinese, and then became an administrator for the Rockefeller Foundation in Peking. After that she worked in New York until she retired. Then she moved to Washington, D.C. to be with her sister. I met them at a party and they found out I was looking for a place to stay. Then they offered me a room in their home.

My living there was an education because they were involved with American and English antiques and architecture. On weekends they took me with them on tours to historic homes in Virginia and Maryland, on the Eastern Shore and so on.

Riess: So they were guides for you. Had you already decided to study art or something?

Kojima: No, no.

Riess: What were you studying at Georgetown?

Kojima: Finances, commerce. I really got involved with arts and antiques through the Halsey sisters, who lived in a lovely Georgetown home.

Riess: Did you have a rapport with the European and American antiques?

Kojima: Yes.

Riess: You felt something.

Kojima: Yes, because you see there was an extension from my family where we had oriental antiques, and some western antiques, too.

Mrs. K: And then Marion when she was in China collected some oriental art, and she had that in the house. You know, tapestries and other furniture and house furniture, lamps, various things. And I think you sort of lived with those. She knew about them and you got interested in talking to her about those things. Gradually it sort of seeped in, I think, through your relationships with them, probably by osmosis or whatever.

Kojima: And, by the way, her good friend, her classmate at Smith College was Dorothea De Schweinitz, who was also involved with antiques. She also showed me different things about antiques. So did Ardelia Hall, another classmate, who was curator of fine arts at the Metropolitan Museum.

Riess: What was it about you?

Kojima: I don't know. Maybe my curiosity.

Riess: Were you in any way a curiosity to them? Was it unusual to know a young Japanese student?

Kojima: No, I guess because they've seen a lot of Orientals. For some reason they took a liking to me.

Mrs. K: You told me once, too, that the two Halsey sisters were very much interested in international student movements and they had students living at their place from time to time. They became very personally interested in you.

Kojima: Well, that's one of the reasons, yes.

Riess: Did you have dinners with them?

Kojima: Yes, usually on weekends. Then they would have interesting guests from all over the world, and they would include me for dinner with them. I learned a lot there.

Riess: That's quite a wonderful beginning for anyone. What was the next step?

Kojima: Well, then I worked for the government for a while.

Riess: What job did you take in the government?

Kojima: Well, I went on a job in the Railroad Retirement Board, working in the actuary department. Then I was transferred to Chicago. This was in 1958. While in Chicago I happened to run across an old girlfriend that I knew at Northwestern, we just happened to run across each other, and Jayne [Kojima's wife] was with her. This is how we met. We found out later that we were in school the same time.

Bureau of Customs, Arts and Antiques Section

Kojima: Then I was transferred over to customs [Bureau of Customs, Department of the Treasury] because there was a person from Georgetown that was head of the Customs Office in Chicago. He hired me.

Riess: You mean a classmate?

Kojima: No. He was an alumnus.

At that time Jayne was working for Japan Air Lines. Then she became pregnant, and then we lost the child. She wanted to do something different, so she worked for the Art Institute in Chicago. Both of us went to school at the Art Institute in Chicago.

Riess: Night classes?

Kojima: Night classes, in art history.

Riess: Was it European art history?

Kojima: European, and primitive.

Then when I went over to Customs, they had a section there covering arts and antiques. It's one of the few jobs in the government where they have an arts and antiques section. That office is responsible for all the arts and antiques that enter through that port, in order to verify and authenticate the items coming through.

Riess: Chicago is a port?

Kojima: Yes. And there were only about a dozen ports where you could bring in antiques at that time. The law was very rigid. San Francisco was one, Los Angeles was another, New York, Boston, New Orleans. So different people were stationed at different ports to examine all the art work and antiques.

Riess: One person at each?

Kojima: Yes. So with the background that I had—not so much college but from the Halsey background and from my family and from the Art Institute--the boss in Chicago said, "Hey, we should try to get you into the art and antiques field."

Riess: Had you had a predecessor there?

Kojima: Well, there was a man there that wasn't going to leave, you see, because he loved the job. Then there was an opening in San Francisco where there was a rumor that this fellow in antiques was going to retire. So I took a chance and I bid on the San Francisco office that was opening a different position, and I got that.

Riess: You bid on the job?

Kojima: You bid on the location. There was an opening in San Francisco. It wasn't in the antique field, but it was in the same department. So when the job opened up I put a bid on it, and I was accepted. I was transferred to San Francisco in 1963. Then a year later, this man retired and I filled his job.

It's an awesome job, because you're supposed to know everything, all antiques, regardless of origin. And that's an impossible task.

Riess: What's the official definition of an antique?

Kojima: Well, at that time it had to be made prior to 1830. They used that date, 1830, because they felt that was the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

Riess: Oh, and has that date slid forward in time?

Kojima: As far as antiques are concerned, in customs it used to be 1830 but now it's a hundred years from the date of the importation. They changed the law about twenty years ago.

Mrs. K: You might say something about how much you learned once you got into the area. You went to school, you went to classes, you studied—all that. And then, what do you call it? The Furniture History Society, you became a member of in London.

Riess: Yes. How did you start? Was there a set of books that you worked from and pictures and diagrams?

Kojima: Well, you really started with the actual shipment in front of you for you to determine. Then you have to ask yourself, is this older than 1830? If so, why? You have to ask all kinds of questions. This is where people like Richard Gump have been very helpful to me. His office was always open to me. We also had a basic library in the office, plus magazines on antiques.

Riess: Did they test you for the job in any way? Or did they just assume that if Chicago said you were good, then you were?

Kojima: Well, they assumed that if you wanted the job you would learn on the job.

One thing I should mention is that Jayne has been a big help to me, because she has a good art background. It includes paintings, and she had a lot of schooling in art. So I could come back with homework and she would help out.

Riess: When you say "art and antiques," what is the distinction? Were you the customs officer for all art work too?

Kojima: It had to be an original work of art. We had a little clause in the art law saying that if it's a work of art and at the same time an item of utility, it would be excluded as a work of art. In other words, Faberge material were all utilitarian pieces, so they wouldn't be considered a work of art. And then when it comes through we'll say, "Oh no, that's a glass container. You have to pay duty on that." And usually the items are very expensive and involve a lot of money in duties.

A Network of Experts

Riess: Let's go back to what Jayne has brought up. Once you got into the job you continued to study?

Kojima: Yes, on our own mostly. Then we tried to develop contacts, like Richard Gump and others with expertise, as well as the curators at the museums. And they all cooperated.

Riess: A big part of your job was creating that network of experts?

Kojima: Yes. And you had to know who to go to. Whenever you ran across an identity problem, then you would ask, now who would be knowledgeable in this line? Well, the field of antiques covers a wide area. Anything could be an antique that was made prior to

Kojima: 1830. Usually the curators in museums were specialized themselves; whether it was in statuary, sculpture, or even paintings, they would have expertise in certain periods, certain schools. A lot of times they would say, "Well, we just don't know." But at the same time I had to know. Somebody had to be an expert or have good knowledge of an item. The museum people would give me the names of private collectors that they knew and I would contact them.

To my surprise, it was usually the housewives that were collectors who had developed their own expertise. And they were excellent. Usually they were college graduates who knew how to do research. And they had the time and means to develop hobbies of their own.

Riess: Well, like the women, for instance, who would be docents at the museums?

Kojima: Yes, sometimes. But they were usually very private people. I would look them up, and when I explained my problems they said, "Oh sure, we would be happy to share our knowledge."

Riess: Yes, of course they would, how flattering.

A Working Day

Riess: Tell me how an importer works with the Customs Office. Let us say I have brought in a shipment, and I need your stamp on it.

Kojima: Well, I would either inspect your shipment at a Customs station or on your premises. The shipment would be sealed until I came to examine it. Richard Gump had most of his shipments done that way. He didn't trust anyone else opening it. He would have it brought in sealed. When I got there, then they would break the case open.

Riess: What are the consequences if he opens it without your being there?

Kojima: Well, a heavy penalty and/or possible seizure of the shipment.

Riess: But who knows that he received it in the first place?

Kojima: His broker posts a bond on the shipment to let us know when and where it will be ready for examination.

Riess: Tell me what the route is into Gump's, coming to Gump's from Deacon and Company, or whatever agent.

Kojima: Gump would hand all the shipping papers over to his broker, Harper-Robinson. When the shipment came in, Harper-Robinson filed customs entry. The entry form would include a complete itemized invoice

Kojima: and all pertinent papers. Then that would all be classified according to our tariff book. The tariff book looks like a Manhattan phone book. Everything is spelled out. They have to list every item that he purchased to the proper tariff nomenclature. Antiques would be in Section 766. Works of art would be in Section 765. With the entry they would request that it be examined on the importer's premises.

Riess: An individual who goes to Hong Kong and brings back antiques, they come in through ordinary Customs?

Kojima: If they claim antiquity and if it's valued at $500 or more, then they'll have to leave the item at the Customs inspection point for later pickup.

Riess: Then do you suddenly appear?

Kojima: I do at the first chance I get. They have to wait for me to clear it or waive antiquity and pay duty. Sometimes I would be out of town and the examination would be delayed.

Riess: It does not sound like a one-man job.

Kojima: It is a busy job. The premise examinations went as far as Utah and Nevada.

Riess: Really? You would go to the premises in Utah and Nevada?

Kojima: Yes. And then they would pay for my transportation back and forth, because it's for their convenience. Otherwise, we'd open it in San Francisco.

Riess: And now you're saying that the reason that you needed to make these contacts with the museum people is that you might open it at Gump's and still be puzzled on one or two items.

Kojima: Yes.

Riess: And then that person from the museum will come over?

Kojima: Not always. I'll explain to them what it was, and then they would be able to identify the item.

Riess: On the telephone?

Kojima: Yes, or in person. I used to carry a Polaroid camera with me and take pictures, and take the pictures to the museum for their opinion. Or I could do research. The important thing was that whatever they told you, you always checked out. A lot of times it might be something else. So you would sort of double-check. And in double-checking you learn something more, and it just mushrooms out.

Riess: This is how you get your expertise.

Kojima: Yes, right.

Riess: You must be a great diplomat to handle that double-checking without offending.

Kojima: Well, you try to be, but sometimes it didn't work. Sometimes they would know only the styles of items. So they would buy the style, but it could be a reproduction, you see.

Riess: You mean, they might buy it over there or buy it sight unseen?

Kojima: They'll go over there and they'll buy it, because they say, gee, that's of this style. But items of that style could have been made all along, until yesterday, until today. So you could have bought one piece that was made after 1830. When I would tell them so, they would be highly insulted.

Riess: Because then they would get stuck with duty.

Kojima: With duty and a penalty.

Riess: And their own foolishness, yes, at the same time.

Kojima: If we turn you down, you pay normal duty as if it were a new item, plus a 25% penalty. So that 25% used to hurt.

Riess: Now, these imports were coming in by ship, by train, by plane, by truck. What is the central gathering place then?

Kojima: Well, it could be at different areas. We have this thing called bonded warehouses, or customs bonded areas. Let's say, if it came from Canada it would be sealed, coming in from Vancouver. We would file the preliminary papers along the border. Then the shipment would come directly down to San Francisco, and you would go to a certain terminal. It would be off-loaded at that terminal, and it would have to be processed with Customs. This is the way we had control over the items. If it came off a ship it had to go to a certain area. If it came in by containers, which most of the shipments come in by, then they would seal those containers to make sure it's not opened. If the seal is ever broken, then they would have our agents make an investigation on that.

Riess: What was your headquarters?

Kojima: The Customs Office on Battery Street, but most of the time I would leave from home for different jobs. I used to cover a big territory, so if I had to be in San Jose I would leave from home. Sometimes I wouldn't get back to the office that day.

Riess: Was your life ever threatened in that job?

Kojima: No, though somebody might jokingly say, "I'll punch you in the nose.

Riess: Were people trying to put something over on you? Or was it ignorance on their part?

Kojima: No, it was mostly ignorance. But also there were times when I thought I knew and found out later that I was wrong. So it worked both ways. With importers I always felt that if I couldn't determine that it was not an antique, then I would give the benefit of the doubt to the importer.

Riess: If you don't pass it?

Kojima: Then he could protest through our court, the Customs Court and Patent Appeal. The judges come from the New York office several times a year to try our cases.

The Florence Agreement

Riess: Somehow I think that you should have to pay more for bringing in an antique.

Kojima: No. We have always allowed free entry for arts and antiques. It wasn't until the Florence Agreement that the trading nations got together to allow reciprocal free entry for arts and antiques.

Riess: When was this?

Kojima: The Florence Agreement itself, I think, was in the 1950s.

Riess: If I found the Elgin marbles and could get them into this country, all I would have to do is pay for the weight and shipping costs?

Kojima: It would come in free of duty. Because, you know, the marbles are over a hundred years old.

Riess: But at the point of origin there are restrictions on the exporting of antiques.

Kojima: Yes, especially in the South American countris and the Iron Curtain countries.

Riess: I begin to think of certain pieces of furniture and works of art as endangered species. Are there enough protections?

Kojima: Yes, for Central American, pre-Columbian art.

Riess: Well, what if it was the last Chippendale chair?

Kojima: In fact, England does have restrictions. If an item is considered a national treasure it allows an English citizen to match the price paid by a foreigner to prevent it from leaving the country.

Riess: Interesting. You wouldn't be aware of that aspect of it, or would you?

Kojima: Well, we worked with Interpol, and if they felt that it left the country without the approval of the English government or without the approval of the Beaux Art in Paris, then they would contact us. Then we would have to wait for the shipment to come in, and we would have to double-check to see that it wasn't a contraband piece.

Riess: I see that Mr. Gump was on the Department of Commerce's Import Advisory Commission [1946-1948]. What is that?

Kojima: I think that was the Foreign Assets Control. But it was before my time.

Riess: What does Foreign Assets Control mean?

Kojima: When the communists took over China--I think that was 1948--the Foreign Assets Control says that anything that came out of China subsequent to 1948 would be illegal without a Foreign Assets Control license. They wouldn't issue a license for Chinese goods after 1948. So if you had something from China, like a Ming vase, you had to prove that it left China prior to 1948. I think that Mr. Gump was involved with the Foreign Assets Control as an advisor because he was involved with China and knew the trade inside out.

Riess: Were the Asian countries party to the Florence Agreement?

Kojima: No. I believe they were observers only. It's usually the western countries that adopted the Florence Agreement, which defined antiques a hundred years from the date of importation.

Riess: Are there special laws that apply to primitive art?

Kojima: Well, in the case of primitives we have the National Treasures Act. If a country felt that they were losing all their national treasures, like pre-Columbian art, they would enact laws restricting the exportation of those items, only allowing items that are licensed by that country to leave with exit permits.

Riess: And if they arrive here you confiscate them?

Kojima: If we had an agreement with that country we would honor it by confiscating the item.

Determining the Fakes

Riess: Let's get to how you knew which the fakes were.

Kojima: Well, the good fakes are hard to determine.

Riess: I know. Mr. Gump has said as much, that they are hard to determine. He discusses discovering how and where the fakes were being made.

Kojima: Well, this was one of the reasons why I met him in Florence, so he could show me these different places where they made reproductions.

Riess: It's the same thing, to say reproduction and fake?

Kojima: Yes. These artisans are making reproductions, not making fakes, and selling them as reproductions. The shady dealers then get these items and sell them as authentic pieces.

Once he took me to a restorer who was restoring chairs that were damaged in the Pitti Palace during that bad flood they had in Florence. He restored all these chairs and they were lined up in his shop. And they wanted one more chair made from this set, so they had made this extra chair. So Richard told this fellow, he said, "Put them together," and he had me look at it to see if I could pick the copy that was made. Well, I picked the wrong one. So it's hard, it's very hard.

Riess: The ones that were originally antiques and were restored, they're still considered to be antiques?

Kojima: Yes. The damage was done to the patina because of the dampness.

And then he took me around to other areas where they were making--you could almost say they were making fakes. See, Italy has a scarcity of woods. In fact, the old wood is all gone now. So in England when they were redoing all of these small hotels which were full of late Victorian and Edwardian furniture which became unpopular at that time in England, when they were restoring these so-called hotels the Italians would come there with big vans and take all this old furniture. As they were bringing the furniture out they broke it all apart and stacked the wood up as lumber.

We saw the vans being unloaded in Italy [photo]. They were taking these pieces, like a pedestal from an old table, and they were making fakes out of this seasoned wood. We were looking in there [the van] and the man came along and Richard said, "See? You have to be careful of these." At that the man grabbed a big door and just slammed it in our face.

Riess: If you construct a chair out of four old legs from England, what do you have?

Kojima: Well, it would be a reproduction, as far as we were concerned, because the original chair is gone. Let's say that if they replace only one leg, then that could be acceptable as an antique, because the bulk of the chair is still intact. We have to use our own judgement on that. I think it's common sense, though, because we're dealing with a gray area. If we had to look at it as black and white, then nothing would ever come into this country. Everything would be stopped.

Riess: Why?

Kojima: Because we'll say, "Well, prove it." It could reach a point of being ridiculous, where it would be impossible to prove because most antiques are not documented.

Riess: Mr. Gump told a story of a dealer in Italy who was selling what he allowed people to think were Waterford vases.

Kojima: [mimicking a woman being conned] "He was so nice. He took me to lunch. He was an honest man. I met his family and his children. They were so nice." I said, "I'm sorry. You have a fake." You have to be very tactful with people. Like I say, we're dealing in a gray area. We just wanted people to be reasonable.

Riess: And ignorance is never an excuse? I mean, if that woman really convinces you that she bought it unknowingly.

Kojima: She's still responsible. If a thing is basically a fake, well then there's nothing called "being reasonable" about it. But there are a lot of borderline cases where you can be reasonable. For instance when an item borders on a hundred years, we wouldn't quibble about the exact date.

Jades and Ceramics

Riess: Were there ways you dealt differently with the jades and the pieces from China and Japan that were coming in?

Kojima: Well, you see, the problem we have with jades--in fact, I think when the 1830 date was used Gump's claimed very little as antiques unless they could prove that this was in a certain home or in a certain palace prior to 1830. The Chinese have felt that it was an honor to copy carvings or paintings. Once a master perfected a carving or a painting, they felt that a faithful reproduction would be collectible. So when it came to a lot of the good jade pieces,

Kojima: they made copies of the original piece. Copies made after 1830 were dutiable, but all copies made before 1830 could come in free. And Gump's was very good about that. They held back, didn't claim unless they were sure that they could prove it on paper.

Riess: Is the disparity in value great between the antique and the perfect modern copy?

Kojima: Oh yes, yes, of course, the older pieces would be more valuable. First of all, you couldn't get that quality of marble any more, or of jade.

Riess: So it was visibly a copy?

Kojima: Sometimes, and sometimes not. Sometimes somebody would find a good stone somehow, out of Burma--that's where most of the jade came from--and make a copy out of that excellent piece.

In the case of ceramics, most of the kilns were sponsored by the imperial families. And you had kilns all over China making ceramics. Each firing they might have, oh, five to ten thousand items in there. And you were lucky if one came out perfect. The perfect item would go to the emperor. As soon as they came out they would see the flaws. And the fewer the flaws, the ownership would be high up in the palace.

Then you had items in the middle that could be sold to the so-called tradesmen. Then you had the bottom rung which went to the junk trade. It's not the junk-junk, it's the boat junk. They would load these pieces onto junks and then send it all over Southeast Asia, where they sold them to natives in exchange for raw material.

Riess: That's very interesting. Well, I certainly didn't know the proportion of flawed to perfect was so high, or so low, or whatever.

Kojima: Well, there was a Ming piece, a plate that sold at Christie's for something like $900,000 or some fantastic figure. And somebody came to me and said, "I got one piece just like that." It could be true, it could have been made in the same kiln. But the one at Christie's was a perfect piece.

Riess: Are kiln firings--well, they're certainly better regulated now than then, aren't they?

Kojima: Yes, they are, they're electronically regulated. But somehow you just can't get the same--first of all, you haven't got the same kaolins and the same clay that they used to get. And there's something about the woods used in the kilns.

Travels with Richard Gump

Riess: Tell me about your travels with Mr. Gump.

Kojima: We were going to Italy in 1970 and he said, "Make sure you save a week for me so I can take you around." We were in Venice first and then we went down to Florence. As soon as we got in the hotel I called him up. He said, "I'll pick you up first thing in the morning." So he would come by in the morning and he would take us around Florence first. All the shops in Florence, the museums and things that he felt that we should see.

He said, "You've seen these pieces coming from Italy. But what I'd like now is to have you see these pieces in their natural surroundings. It will mean more," which it did. After we did Florence for two days we started going to the outskirts of Florence, like Arezzo and Siena. We would stop by different castles and churches. During these stops he would get his notebook out and make quick sketches of interesting details on buildings. While driving between towns we would discuss what we saw and he would point out the various important details. During these drives we went to Lucca, and Pisa, and most of the Tuscany area.

Riess: And he was doing this just for the two of you?

Kojima: Yes.

Riess: And because he likes to teach.

Kojima: He was retired. He sold the store. So yes, he wanted to share what he had learned through the years. He had lived there as a kid.

Riess: Now how else did he use those sketch books? When he was importing things did he use the sketch books to verify?

Kojima: He used a camera to verify his purchases, and what he couldn't photograph, he sketched. For example, if you look in his other apartment you'll see some of the design on the woodwork on the paneling and ceiling which came from his sketchbook. Then he would call a carpenter in and have the pieces reproduced. The sketchbooks were mostly for his own future reference.

Riess: Did he share with you any thoughts on how people should deal with antiques?

Kojima: He talked mostly of what he would do, not what other people should do, how he would use it. Sometimes he would draw the whole surrounding and he'd say, "This is how it should fit in." He had a house on Scott Street which had antiques placed the way he felt they fit in. Many of the antiques were for display and use.

Riess: You say that your first contact was 1965? But you didn't get to know him really until 1970-71?

Kojima: I knew him pretty well by '66. But I was dealing mostly with Martin Rosenblatt--who was vice-president at Gump's--because Richard Gump was hardly ever there. He was away a lot. But every time he was in he always wanted to see me.

Riess: When he had a buyer for something, if it were a choice between a museum and an individual, do you think he had a bias one way or the other?

Kojima: Well, I've always felt that he was very pro-museums. He would rather see it on display so it would be exposed. The reason why I say this is that his personal collections were always freely shown at his home, unlike some collectors that would jealously guard their goods. But he would be very free with his collection, and openly discuss it with anyone interested.

Oh, and by the way, a lot of the books that we have in our art and antique library at Customs were given to us by Gump's. When they had duplicates they would donate them to Customs.

One thing I was really amazed at in Florence was how he knew Florence so well. He knew every corner of the city.

Riess: Did the merchants know him?

Kojima: Yes. He could speak the different dialects of that area which was a big plus in dealing with them. And once--I still chuckle over this--once he picked me up in the car and we were trying to get to a piazza there, and he cut a truck off. (In order to get into a piazza you have to outbully each other, otherwise you'll never make it--you know, it's like getting on a subway in New York.) And this driver was mad. And then he saw me and he yelled, "Tourista!" The truckdriver got right behind us and he blasted the horn. I could see him waving his fist out the window. I said, "You cut this truck off." Richard said, "Well, to get anywhere you have to do it."

So that truck kept following us. We would get off the piazza and go down one street and he was still following, honking his horn and tailgating us. He just stuck right by us.

I said, "Richard, he's still with us." And he said, "Well, I'll teach that S.O.B." So he started to zigzag and the truck zigzagged, and then he said, "Ken, hold on. I'm going to make a quick turn." So we made a quick turn on an ordinary street that suddenly narrowed into an alley. It was wide enough for his little Fiat to get through, so he went right through there, and that truck followed and got stuck between two buildings. [laughter] And he said, "See, I knew Florence better than he did!"

Riess: Oh dear!

He could speak the dialects of the dealers and restorers and so on?

Kojima: Oh yes, he really could. They all knew him because--I think he was telling me he used to spend his summers in Italy. I think his mother and father were divorced and his mother moved to Venice where she had a home. So during the summers he travelled in Italy and learned all these dialects.

Other Experts

Riess: Who else in San Francisco could you go to as an expert the way you could Mr. Gump?

Kojima: A good friend of Richard Gump's, a man called Harry Barnett. He was known as the daddy of the antique dealers. He's dead now, but he was on Sansome Street, and he was one of the pioneers in the antique field. He was one of the most respected persons. And he was also a person that had to know how a piece was originally made, even the type of glues used and the type of nails that were used. So if he had to restore a piece he would try to use the original method. For instance if an antique table had to be polished, it was never with a machine buffer, always with your hand. He was of the old school. He had a workshop in the basement right across the street from Customs. If he took a table or chair apart, or the upholstery off a wing chair, and he wanted me to see it, he would call me over and say, "Hey, take a look." In this way I would see the original construction of many pieces. That was interesting.

Riess: Did it ever come to the point where you took something apart in order to figure out whether or not it was antique?

Kojima: No. The only time any antique was taken apart was when they suspected that there were narcotics involved. This was handled by Customs agents.

Riess: How did you work with Butterfield's?

Kojima: Oldtimers like Butterfield's and Gump's would have everything set out at the warehouse, numbered according to the invoices so that each piece could be easily identified.

Riess: And did it get to be fairly routine?

Kojima: Sometimes it did, yes. Especially when it came to Victorian furniture made in the mid and late 19th century. This was during the Industrial Revolution and they reproduced a lot of this furniture.

When we talk about English period furniture, what they usually mean is furniture prior to 1830. Because at that time, prior to the Industrial Revolution, there were very few families in England that could afford these original pieces. And they were built by so-called city cabinet makers, you know, Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and so on. And when the Industrial Revolution came in, suddenly England had the strongest middle class in the world. And they wanted the same type of furniture, so they made reproductions of these earlier original pieces. And much of these Victorian reproductions are now being pawned off as early period pieces.

Riess: And in the late 1960s, after the law changed, the pieces from 1830 to the 1860s came flooding in?

Kojima: Yes. And a lot of old Victorian and Edwardian furniture came in. Importers, influenced by decorators, got interested in buying so-called antiques by the vanloads. They would go over there and they would buy anything from the Victorian and Edwardian era. They just had tons of the stuff. A lot of it was pretty awful, like some of the old coat racks.

Riess: Coat racks?

Kojima: You know, hall racks, of all shapes and forms. And all this would come in because the law was changed, and now they could get it in as antiques. I was talking to the British consul at that time about it, and he said, "Well, you know, I can see where it could be an eyesore for you, but look at it from our angle, it's housecleaning!" [laughter] He said, "We're finally getting rid of that stuff." They used to called them "old Vickies."

Riess: Any other importers or expert dealers you think of?

Kojima: There was Mr. Bentz, Robert Kasper, E. T. March, and Peg McDonough. All of these old-timers are gone now. The younger generation look at the field differently from the way the old-timers did.

Riess: Why?

Kojima: It became lucrative. The decorators got into the act of importing and bringing in things. At that point it just got to be a bore to look at the items because all the shipments started to look alike. So when Richard would have an item or a museum would have a piece, then that was like a dessert. You could look forward to it.

Riess: Who were the decorators who worked with the older pieces?

Kojima: Archibald Taylor used to be an old-timer. He was a good friend of Richard Gump's, I think. Yes, and there was a marvelous woman, Jeanette Kapstein. I think she was in her nineties when she died. And she was also an old friend of Richard's. I can remember, I was with Jeanette once and Richard happened to walk by. She was much older than Richard, and she said, "Richard, you're not looking well. You have to take care of yourself, Richard." He said, "You're like a Jewish mama!" She said, "Are you eating properly?"

Riess: I think of Gump's as being without competitors in some way, but I guess there were a few.

Kojima: Well, he was by himself for a long time. He was a man that went by his own convictions. He didn't have to have marketing researches before he did anything. He went by instinct. He felt that if it was the right thing to do, it was the right thing to do.

Right after he sold the store, he made one buying trip to the Far East for Gump's. It was an agreement that he had with the Macmillan Company. He bought a beautiful screen from the Momoyama period. The new owners were upset because they felt he paid too much money for it. They said, "No, it's not going to sell." They were very upset and let him know it. So he said, "If you're so unhappy about it, I'll take it back." They had it for about a year, and then asked him to take it back, and he did. Within ten years I understand that the screen has tripled in price. Which proved to me, he had the right instincts. In my opinion, Mr. Gump's retirement from the store left a void in San Francisco's arts and antiques circle, and it will never be the same.

[End of Interview]

[There is no page 194]

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Paul Faria and Clariece Graham

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL FARIA AND CLARIECE GRAHAM

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1988

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A Job at Gump's, February 1947 *

Faria: The way I think of Richard Gump is just relaxed and low key, no airs, just Gump and that's the way he was.

Graham: [laughs] You always put things so well, Paul.

Faria: He's an individual, he doesn't fit a mold.

Riess: You've known him a long time. He was a relatively young man when you met him. Has he changed over the years?

Faria: I met him in 1947. And I think he's been pretty consistent over the years. I think since he's been away from the store he's a little more relaxed. But even when he was at the store he was still basically Gump, he didn't put on some kind of a hat and be "head of the store." A low-key man who got things done in his own way. I think that was part of his charm, that he didn't fit the mold as a businessman. He wasn't a desk-pounding executive. He did it his way, and it worked.

Riess: Did you know his father?

Faria: I only saw him two or three times, because I started there in 1947. I wouldn't know anything about the man at all.

Riess: I wondered if any of the others who you worked with, employees from earlier, would have made any references to the differences between Richard Gump and his father.

Faria: No, I wouldn't know that. When I got there the store had an overlay of groups of people. There were employees who were hitting a twenty-five year period, and they worked together with the new generation. That was good because you had this carry-on of experience and talent. The older employees were the roots of the store, and you had this continuation of experienced people passing on the tradition of the store. But I came at a break.

Riess: The break was the end of the war?

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*Interviewed May 6, 1988.

Graham: Well, he took over in 1944 as vice-president and general manager.

Riess: And new blood came in at that point.

Faria: You had people coming back from the war. I think there was a transition in a lot of businesses at that time. I got out of the service and it was a year after that I started working at the store. So most of the employees were people who had been there a short time, and then an overlap of another generation.

Riess: That's what I thought might make for a discussion of the different management styles.

Graham: I think Mr. Gump mentioned in the interview that it was a little hard to get people to change to his way of doing things. The windows as an example.

Faria: Oh, there was a definite change there. At that time they became an unusual Gump's attraction, probably starting with Don Smith.*

Riess: What was your background before going to work for Gump's?

Faria: I was a professional musician; I got out of school and I became a professional musician very early. Until the end of the war I traveled with a name band around the United States. It was called the Carl Ravazza Orchestra and we played in fine hotels throughout the country. I worked with my dad during the daytime as a finisher and played as a musician at night.

My dad was one of the master craftsmen in town. He worked with all the fine decorators in town. And my uncles were associated with the decorating and the fine furniture trade. So I got my background for that starting in 1935 when I started working for my dad. I had a feeling for what I was doing because I could work with my hands. So I had a choice of going to art school when I got out of high school or being a musician. I was able to get into music immediately so I got into that instead.

Riess: What is the family's origins?

Faria: I'm Portuguese.

Riess: Was the furniture work a skill that had been in the family for several generations?

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*See p. 44.

Faria: No. The family had come over from Portugal the generation before my dad, and they had a mix of general jobs. One of my dad's uncles started a custom furniture company which included a cabinet shop and furniture finishing shop. My dad started working for one of his uncles as a cabinet-maker. Then the shop needed a finisher so he went into finishing and continued in that. Eventually my dad started his own company. When I worked for him we also did cabinet-making and antique reproduction.

The funny thing is I picked up on this later. I didn't intend it. But I had acquired a technical background which prepared me to supervise furniture-making and finishing, which I eventually did at Gump's later on.

After the war a friend of mine got me a job as a salesperson with Formica Company as a representative. But at that time it was hard to get plastic materials so when they ran out of materials in certain cases I figured I'd better get another job. I was talking to my father and he said, "Why don't you go down and see Gordon Mills at Gump's? I know him, I've done work for him, and he can give you an idea of what the opportunities are in the interior design business."

I stopped in, just as an informational thing, to find out what the opportunities were, like a lot of fellows getting out of the service, starting in on a new life. My plan was not to go back into music, not get into something that required travel. Mr. Mills thought they might have an opening in a stock position, and he asked me if I'd be interested. I said I wasn't even looking for a job. He said, "Well, we might call you." So he called me in a couple of weeks, said there was an opening, did I want the job? I figured I had nothing to lose. This gave me an opportunity to become acquainted with the very thing I was inquiring about. And it was the best place to get that; there was no better place than Gump's as far as our particular field was concerned.

Riess: This was stock in the Interior Design Department?

Faria: Yes, and I was connected directly, I was given exposure to the very thing that interested me. I saw the entire operation. I was there for a few months and I hit a point where I wasn't learning any more and I indicated that I had to leave because I couldn't support my family. I didn't make much in a stock job. So they gave me some sort of a promotion. In fact I did that a couple of times, indicated I was leaving, because I had to. [laughter] But they felt I was valuable.

Riess: Who's "they?"

Faria: Mr. Gump. He knew I was around. We talked. He was that way, he wandered around the store. He would talk to me. I guess he knew pretty much about everybody who came in. He must have surveyed everything.

Graham: Oh yes, he would know when someone showed promise.

Faria: They were strict on who they hired. Even the people in the basement had to take the Design Test. That meant they were screened so that everybody who was there loved what they were doing; it wasn't just a job.

Riess: You took it? I thought he put that together later.

Faria: Oh yes, he must have had it going--I took it along with the rest of them.

Graham: I think he had it about the time the book [Good Taste Costs No More] came out, the 1950s.

Faria: We all took it, there was a screening.

Riess: You mean once the Design Test had been put together all the employees who were working there took it? But he didn't use it as a basis for firing people, did he?

Faria: No, no, it wasn't that kind of a thing.

I interviewed hundreds of people for my own department there, and it's all part of it. I had someone who came in who was highly qualified. He had a background, his mother was a decorator. You'd say, "Gee, this man is valuable." And up to the point of the final examination I said, "I think I'm going to hire this man." And then he showed me some of his work, and I couldn't any more hire him than the man in the moon. He had lousy taste. You don't hire people because of experience; they have to meet the standard of taste; that's as much a part of the thing as the technical background. And it wasn't that his taste was different, it was that it wasn't good.

And then the store has a style, too, that you follow. That was the strength of the store, the fact that it looks different and has a style. But that taste story, that's an example of where you have to screen. And taste is uppermost, an innate sense of taste. Not great knowledge, but a sense of taste. That Design Test brought that out.

That test made good sense. People came to the store and they stayed, and you were investing in them. You can't have people getting a job then leaving tomorrow. You invest time. It's a continual process of training, and you don't want to waste time. So

Faria: you pick the people who you feel have a leaning that way. Then the continued exposure to this--it automatically rubs off.

Riess: Sounds like you had to keep pushing them to move you up, otherwise you would leave.

Faria: Oh no. You could go into the stock department and remain in the stock department, which a lot of people did. A lot of the people in the basement were artists who had gone through art school. They took the job because they wanted to work in stock, and they wanted to be in stock at Gump's, not in some impersonal store. These were people with tremendous backgrounds, and they just liked being around that kind of quality and atmosphere. But a lot of people didn't want to go past a certain level. You didn't have to move up. Standard Oil, you get in and you have to go up, but the store wasn't that way.

Riess: But you went up.

Faria: Well, I stayed there long enough, for one thing.

And then I worked with Mr. Gump, we got involved with our German band, you know, things of common interest. That's one of the things that kept me there. Then I became the head of the Interior Design and European Antique departments in stock and it was very stimulating because I was working with someone who had an appreciation for what we were doing. In fact he was involved. It was his background also--he had a love for music, he also worked in the Design Department as a younger person. We saw eye to eye, and he gave a lot of support to what we were doing. He was actually nurturing what we were doing, and so we continued to expand. It was a very interesting experience.

The Decorating Business--Gump's Furniture Department

Faria: Richard Gump loved to buy in Europe. When his purchases finally arrived at the store he was always anxious to have the crates unpacked so he could see it all. It was like receiving gifts. Like Christmas.

When you buy antiques on a long trip you must plough through a hodge-podge of miscellaneous furniture and small items in shops and barns. But when you receive it you see only the pieces that you hand-selected on the trip and it is very rewarding. And of course Mr. Gump was interested in knowing what the people thought of what he bought, too. He liked the approval of what he bought.

Riess: Of course that lovely piece of furniture vanishes once you sell it.

Faria: But in our department, the Interior Design Department, many times you did get to see what happened to it. If you sold it to them for their home and you went to their home you'd see it in its final resting place. And then the people would say, "I love it, it's part of my life."

Decorating is a very personal thing. It's like a doctor, or any profession, an architect. You find out about the people, you set a formula to satisfy them, you put it together, you finally have it complete, and you see that they're happy. But if you're not attentive you could do a whole job and then the client may say, "I don't like this."

In our business you just don't run around as in a furniture store and say "I'll take this and that" and throw it together and ship it out. You talk to the client, find out how they live; you select things that tie in with what they think and how they live. And then you design pieces and manufacture them, you just don't go and pick them off a shelf.

Riess: It's not off the floor.

Faria: Well, unusual pieces were on the floor, individual things that had been gotten from all over the world. But also we had models of exclusive designs from which customers could order. They usually wanted their own wood finish or fabric selection, and many times a special size. And for those who had special needs we had the capability to design just about anything.

The store had probably the widest range of interior design services that you would find anywhere. We not only had stock, we had access to all the other sources outside the store and our own Design Department where we designed thousands of pieces. So each order could have been, from the word Go, an individually-designed or complete interior design job for a particular client.

Riess: Who did you work most closely with?

Faria: When I took over the department? Basically Richard Gump. He told me, "I want you to take over the Interior Design and Antiques departments, and it's not because you play good clarinet." [laughter] What he meant was he wasn't making a gift of it because I played in his band and I was a good musician. He indicated that he thought I was capable of doing it. He saw me operate with the band. We were working together close enough so that he saw my capabilities managing the band. In doing this well he felt I could manage the two departments, which I could, I was highly qualified.

Faria: He did this with other people too. He didn't make gifts of jobs; they qualified and he supported them. He selected a group of people who understood how to work with him and who were able to function in their jobs well. And he didn't have to push them. You had an agreement that you're going to do a job and you're working for the store. You wanted to do a good job for Mr. Gump--and for those who knew him closely, for "Richard." And this was all the way through, down to the carpentry shop.

He would go down to the carpentry shop and have coffee with Harry Taylor, this English cabinetman that he respected because of his ability. He could wander around the store and be friendly with everybody, and that was his style. Not like somebody in some office somewhere that you never met and you're afraid of. He was looking around and talking to people, like an associate, and that was a strength of the store.

Riess: People weren't afraid of him.

Faria: No. He's the boss and you have to do what the boss says, but the point is you were not afraid to tell him what you thought because he didn't put you on guard. He's talking to you, like we're talking now, but he's thinking a lot. He's not wandering around like a dumbo, not paying attention. He's around. A lot of times he didn't say much, but he was listening a lot. And a lot of times I'm sure he changed his decisions after he got to wandering around talking to people.

I know many times he'd come to me and say he wanted to do something and we'd talk, and he'd change his mind. Not that I had influence on him, but with the input that I had, and other people, he'd change his mind based on the fact that he got to the people that were actually involved. He was working with the people as individuals. That was another strength of the store.

Riess: What would have been a typical day for you?

Faria: I had at that time eight decorators, decorator-salespeople. They were decorators who sold. Not salespeople who knew something about decorating.

I hired them with the idea that they either had qualifications as decorators or could be trained. In most cases I took young people because they were the most adaptable. The store had a style and if I thought they had the talent and could be trained I would hire them. In most cases I took people out of art school or with a little background so that they could be trained in what we were doing. It was a continual training process in our department, as I felt I was being trained continually to raise our qualifications.

Faria: I told the people, "We're one of the top stores in the world. And we personally may not match exactly what the ultimate is, but we are continually trying to fit the image of our particular position and name. We're continually qualifying to be the best in the business."

Riess: Did they come from art schools all over the country?

Faria: Oh yes, could have been from anywhere. Could have been from Schaeffer's [Rudolph Schaeffer's School of Design, San Francisco], could have been Parson's [School of Design, New York], or any other good school. But it didn't have to be. I wasn't school-trained. Applicants could qualify either by experience or school, whatever. I didn't take just anybody. Sometimes I'd go through forty or fifty to get someone who'd qualify.

Riess: Were the salaries competitive?

Faria: The union at that time controlled what people could make, and what they could make would depend on their sales. In fact, the reason I picked younger people was because a lot of the older people in our business are so set in what they do--their style is already determined.

The decorating business is kind of a one-person operation. You don't have a lot of stores with highly-qualified decorators because anyone can get a resale number and they're a "decorator." But people working out of their home don't have the same kind of discipline, they don't go to their job and work so many hours and go home, they do it when they want. Well, after somebody's been doing this for a few years it's very difficult for them to adapt to the framework of a store and the routine of selling on the floor. So in many cases they were not suitable to work in that kind of an arrangement.

Riess: How did you assign customers to salespeople?

Faria: We didn't operate like other stores. At a lot of stores, when people came in and said they wanted to do a decorating job a decorator would be assigned. I didn't do that. Our people on the floor were all qualified decorators and the customer determined who they were going to work with.

Riess: How?

Faria: They talk to the person and ask themselves, "Do I like this person? Do I want this person in my home?" And if they didn't like a person they would not set up an appointment. Sometimes they would talk with one person and next time they came in they would speak to another and set up a decorating appointment.

Faria: It's like going to a doctor, it's a very personal thing. You don't have people in your home unless you trust them and like them. You don't like to discuss how you live, or open up to someone you feel funny about. The way we did it made it a personal choice by the customer.

I practically never assigned anyone to a job. To me, it would never work out. Only in cases where I had a difficult customer that had a problem, and I'd say to them, "I know this person is going to be able to handle this."

Riess: Was Eleanor Forbes working under you?

Faria: Yes, she was in charge of the Interior Design Department up until 1958. At that time--she was a designer, and the work load was such that it was not possible for her to properly manage the department and also do her designing. So in effect--Mr. Gump wanted to expand the department. At that time he was bringing in antiques from Europe. And it was a combination of things: to relieve her of the responsibility of running a department and to expand the Antique Department, he asked me to take over. That worked out for me because decorating is a very demanding thing, and I felt that I was ready to make a change anyway. It was a matter of timing. But before that I had worked for twelve years as a decorator.

Riess: Yet you were untrained as a decorator.

Faria: In fact I had an unusual training. Many decorators wish they had my background. Mine was a thorough technical background. I can do anything in my business myself. I can go down and make a piece of furniture and I'm an expert finisher. That actually made me very qualified to support the people who were working for me, if they came to me with a problem. I was doing that before I took over the department. If anyone had a problem with the finish or anything else I was helping them solve the problem. It was very normal for me to phase into management because I had already been working along with the people, supporting them.

Knowing What the Customer Wants--Antiques

Riess: I can see that you would hold your own with Richard Gump.

Faria: You have to be on the same wave-length with him. A lot of people think that he's ignoring them. He might walk by them and not say Hello or acknowledge them. Well, his mind is thinking about

Faria: something else. Could be music, could be anything. He is a very sensitive man who does a lot of thinking. Outside of Mrs. Graham who probably knows him better than anybody--sure, she was with him so many years--but in my area I think I knew him as well as anybody. And you have to know somebody like that to know what they're thinking and to work with them. Otherwise you say, "I don't understand this person."

Gump a lot of times might start to talk about something and he might not finish it, and then he might pick it up a month or two later and complete the thought. Or it could be ten years later. With a man like Mr. Gump you have to be in tune with him. If you aren't, you can't work with him. You have to know him well enough--it's not that you think alike, but you have to be going down the same path.

He does things on instinct. When I first started to work at the store in 1947 they had a very fine antique department, a small one down on the first floor. Well, people weren't buying antiques, so they closed it out. The department was sitting there, occupying valuable space, and they eliminated it. Now that was in '47. For a period of about ten years antique furniture was out of fashion. The general public was not buying it.

Around 1957, and long before others were onto it, Mr. Gump sensed a renewed interest in antiques. So on one of his trips to Europe he bought a few pieces of antique furniture and put them in the Silver Department to display the silver. And also he started bringing in antique silver. This tied the furniture and silver together. And of course when the furniture was on the floor people would say, "I want to buy this." Again, being sensitive to what the customer wanted he started to bring in more furniture. He felt that antiques were coming back. This is what I say, he had this sense of what was going on. So he brought more antiques back and they sold and it got to the point where the demand warranted a separate department.

By that time he had a number of pieces of antique furniture that needed proper stock control. Then I guess he decided he wanted to include European antiques with our Interior Design Department to make one department with one director. He asked me to take over and he handed me a bunch of cards and said, "This is the department, and here's the inventory." And we tied it together.

Actually there had been two departments, an Antique Department and a Department of Interior Design, and people working in both. It was unreasonable. By tying both together and using the same personnel it actually fostered sales in both departments which was wise because the Antique Department became large enough to make it an entity in the store. So when that happened our sales doubled and

Faria: then they doubled again and Mr. Gump continued to bring in more antiques. I mean we really had a going antique business.

In 1960 and 1964 I went on European trips with him. We had a tremendous antiques business. But when the fire came [December 22, 1968] it destroyed everything in the second main building on Post Street, including special antique stock and an irreplacable collection of antique pieces being saved for reproduction models.

Riess: Was Eleanor Forbes head of the Furniture Department, or something called the Decorating Department?

Faria: When I took over the Department of Interior Design Miss Forbes became a nucleus in the department. Her operation became the "Design Studio." She designed some things for the store; she designed parts of the store, the interior of the store. And she phased into working with her own clientele and decorating. She had a couple of people assigned as assistants on her individual decorating jobs. Those same people also did the drawings of furniture for the rest of the department. If there was furniture to be designed they would either design it completely or work with the decorator on his or her idea for a design and then draw it in fullsize detail.

When you make furniture--let's say you were going to make a cabinet, you have to draw that up to give it to the shop. You don't just tell the shop, "Make that cabinet." It's like an architect, you have to design it in detail. You have to give a fullsize detail drawing to the shop. Miss Forbes controlled that operation, but she worked as a nucleus within the department. From '58 on I was the director of that operation, which included her, but she worked pretty much as her own little operation. We didn't subordinate her; actually we allowed her to not get involved with inventory. It was a waste of talent. She did the things which she was highly qualified to do, as one of the top designers in the world. We took over the merchandising end of it and we expanded the interior design service.

Riess: When you talk about having things done "in the shop," are you talking about the Gump's shop?

Faria: Well, we had a number of shops that we'd worked with for years. And when I took over I set up a new operation, one factory that did things in quantity. Because of my background I was able to do that. I got a shop that I could work with and we expanded their operation so that they did my designs and my finishes and the rest for which I had the background. So we set up a whole new operation.

Riess: They were in San Francisco?

Faria: No, they're down on the Peninsula.

Riess: Exclusive with Gump's?

Faria: Primarily. We gave them all the business they could handle. At that time we had fifteen men in the shop. I set that up in '61. They were making electronic crates at the time. I started to work with them, and I could talk to them technically and I knew that they could handle it. So we expanded that into a tremendous operation, millions of dollars of special designs, exclusive for the store.

Riess: When you say "exclusive," was it possible to keep anyone from copying a design?

Faria: No, nobody has an exclusive. You have people borrowing ideas all the time. Designs of mine have been copied down in Jackson Square and other places. You have no control.

Riess: But that was a theme of Gump's, the exclusivity.

Faria: You could take a big furniture company and have them produce what they think is the same thing as Gump's and have them put it on the market and not sell one. We had a particular customer, and what is right for our customer is not right for the masses. It's not that it's any better, it's just that there was a certain quality in our furniture that our customers looked for that was not found in commercial furniture.

Somebody from the outside wouldn't know what your best sellers are. I might have something on the floor, and who knows if I'd sell one of these or a million of them. But you don't have a lot of that because everyone has his own idea, and they know what they're doing in their own field for their customer.

Before we put a design on the floor we knew what the customer was going to buy. It practically never failed. You'd say, "They're going to look for something about this size, that has a certain look, around a certain price," put it on the floor and it'd start to sell.

Of course, all good buyers know what their customers want. Except in our case we started from scratch. We'd design it and put it together. And a lot of times if you have something--say a table that is going to cost $600, you know the customer won't buy it at that price so you won't make it. You say, "I'm going to make a table that <u>looks</u> like that and it's got to sell for $325." Otherwise you're a bad merchandiser. You know before and if you price it right you get an immediate sale because you know what your customer wants. And that happens basically with any merchandiser. Except in our case we had an edge because we could make it the way

Faria: he wanted; we didn't have to ask the manufacturer, "Could you make it in purple?" We were the manufacturer so we did not have to take just what was available.

Recognizing and Merchandising the Unusual--Reproduction Models

Faria: At that time, when I took over, people were looking for country pieces, they were looking for antiques. That tied in with the Antique Department. And we knew from selling antiques of a certain look that they sold right away, so I started putting those away as reproduction models. We bought pieces from auction; any place you could find a model, we bought. We would buy antiques in Europe with the idea we were going to reproduce them.

Riess: You put them away? You mean you wouldn't sell them?

Faria: No, we put them away. I had them stashed away up on the Fourth Floor. And when we had the fire I lost some of the most valuable models, things that I would have reproduced over the years. It was a tremendous loss. It wasn't so many dollars worth of things, it was all that could have been generated in unusual designs. I stored them away with the idea that they were part of our research department. We were going to expand on that, because we were continually looking for unusual things that were different and could not be found elsewhere, and things we knew would sell.

Riess: Could you have had a manufacturer in France reproduce a piece of country French furniture as inexpensively?

Faria: No, no, it wouldn't be right. You wouldn't have any control. You look at a piece over there and say, "Gee, I like this, will you make it up?" It doesn't come back the way it looked over there. And how can you communicate back and forth? We're not talking about fifty of something, and eighty of something. It's so exacting. You have to be there and personally tell them; you have to say, "This is how I want it."

Riess: I thought on those buying trips you and Mr. Gump might contact people that he felt as good about as he felt about your work, for instance.

Faria: Yes, we had special shops that did certain things right, so that sometimes it wouldn't pay to make it here. That's true. Up in Udine, up in northern Italy, there were shops that did unusual things, that weren't the run-of-the-mill, and we bought a lot of

Faria: furniture from them. There are certain areas in Europe which specialize in a particular style of furniture. These shops are all in a cluster, and they do unusual things. But a lot of furniture in high production, whether you're making high production there or here, comes out commercial-looking and the same. You have to have small production, and the person who's doing it has to understand what you're talking about, to get the unusual finishes and the right look.

There was one factory that we went to outside of Milan, I think it was. We went through the whole factory and we couldn't find anything. It was all the standard Italian production. I looked--there was a screen, and there was an arm sticking out, and I said, "What's that?" The owner said, "You don't want that." I said, "Well, let me just see it." We dragged it out, and the only piece we bought from that man was this chair. It was really goofy, a mixture of French and Swedish, a little dumpy chair. We bought the thing and placed a substantial order for stock of the same design. We waited months for delivery and the factory could not guarantee any flow of orders. Finally we had to reproduce it because we couldn't get delivery. But it was the only thing that we picked out of that whole factory.

Riess: Describe it more.

Faria: [drawing chair] It was a fireside chair with a Louis XVI leg. It had a funny frame, a strange back and arms. The arms stuck way out and it had an openwork back with a woven grass seat. You could play with this little chair. We made cushions for the seat and back and we made different kinds of woven seats for it.

I've purchased chairs at auction where all I wanted from the chair was one feature that had a certain shape to it. I would buy it and we would design a chair around that particular shape. Or I might buy something for the finish and then say to the finisher, "This is the effect I want." And then by showing the finisher an actual old finish and discussing with him the finishing technique to be used he could visualize it in its completed form.

These little chairs--I still have them stored away, these little models that I've saved. And if I were to put them on the market I could sell loads of them to the decorators. I'm not in that business and I don't intend to be, but all these things have potential for the decorating trade. They don't want the ordinary, they want something unusual. It opens up a whole range of possibilities. When you go to the unusual you find the decorators with imagination love the unique. And you can't go to a store and buy this. Where can you go to buy these things?

Riess: Was it important that certain social people who would be thought of as trend-setters be buying these things? Is that what made something popular, that it got into a certain house?

Faria: No. But people look at decorating magazines and get ideas which they would want to use in their own homes. For instance, we brought a load of clocks over from Europe and they sat around for a while and all of a sudden people started buying clocks. You'd ask, "Why?" Well, all you'd have to do is look in a magazine and see that an old clock was used in an attractive setting. That's when the people started buying clocks. It might have been Better Homes and Gardens or House and Garden, or the more professional magazines, like Arts and Architecture. Anybody can buy these magazines, and when people see things and see how they are used, they start looking for something similar.

We had a shipment of Bavarian furniture which Gump and I bought. We were ahead of the time on that too. We had the stock warehoused and it wasn't selling too readily. We had it on the floor, and some of it had been reduced. Of course with antiques the price is based on what the going market is, what it's worth. You have to, a lot of times, drop things to nothing, and other things you have to increase to balance off your investment because they become more valuable. It's like property, it goes up based on demand. Some of these things tripled in value from the time that we bought them 'til the time that we put them on the floor.

I put a Bavarian coffer on the floor one time, and by gosh we had a number of calls for it. People said, "Oh, my, what about this?" I had a bunch of them in the back and I brought them out and they sold just like that. [snaps fingers] They had been sitting around and we'd had them on the floor before, but you have a whole cycle of interest in certain furniture pieces and you don't know why.

Riess: How do you get your furniture into a magazine like Arts and Architecture?

Faria: We don't put our furniture in. We're talking about an idea.

Riess: But you do have a vested interest in popularizing some things, don't you?

Faria: No. We were never interested in trying to popularize, because we were not trying to set a trend and sell millions of something. Certain businesses commercially want to set trends so they can sell gobs of them and they have the factory produce them in thousands and ship them out, but we were not in that kind of a business. We fit a niche where people were looking for unusual things that were not

Faria: necessarily the trend. It's what's best for you. I never decorated a home based on a trend, nor used the color that was "in."

Riess: How did you publicize the Interior Design Department? Don't people think mostly of Gump's for gifts?

Faria: There are different levels of knowledge of the store. A lot of people across the country and generally have thought of Gump's as just Oriental. But it's actually international. You have Italian, a lot of European merchandise.

Riess: But when a magazine article features homes with rooms done by Gump's Interior Design Department, doesn't that bring people in holding the magazine and wanting the same?

Faria: We were never strong on a lot of publicity about what we did. The store had publicity, but I'm talking about decorating publicity.

Graham: I think it's hard to advertise things unless you have a lot of stock to back them up. You can show an idea of a room and people would come in. But the displays--don't you think, Paul, the displays around the store, these wonderful setups all over the store, did a great deal? And as you mention, someone might go in and buy one chair and if they get one of these good decorators, the decorators might ask about how they're going to use it, and the first thing they know they're buying a group of pieces.

The Design Test

Graham: We gave the Design Test to everyone in the store and by their test score Mr. Gump might for instance find somebody in the basement who has excellent taste. Then you can bring that person up into the merchandising scheme of things, more or less based on that, and find out what they can do in merchandising because they already have good taste. I think he told me--or I'm quite sure that was the impression I got--that he didn't think you could teach people good taste, you have to have a sort of a feeling for it.

Riess: Even though someone might be exposed to good taste all the time, that wouldn't be enough to teach them?

Graham: No, and we used to argue about that all the time.

Faria: It's like in music. You can have a musician who technically will play piano or any other instrument, but there's no soul. Liberace was technically an incredible musician, but a lot of people didn't

Faria: think of him as a classical musician. I never heard him make a mistake, but the point is, when he played jazz, he was not a jazz pianist. He didn't have that "something." He was a mechanic, and he was excellent, but he wouldn't fit the mold of someone you would say was a "great pianist." He was doing too many things.

Riess: Could someone be weak in one aspect of the Design Test and strong in another? And pass?

Graham: Sometimes I've seen Mr. Gump take someone's test and see what areas their mistakes were in. Then he'd get a sort of feeling about what they knew. But as a rule he would look at the overall score.

Faria: It was a well-designed test, and it wasn't technical. If you were talking about technical then it would be unfair. It was general. In other words, they got a lot out of a very simple test. For instance packaging, how to wrap a package, was it better with this kind of wrap or that? Yet there was enough of a range in that test so that you got a pretty good idea of a person. And I guess nobody made a hundred percent. If they did, there would be something peculiar!

You could disagree with Mr. Gump! "That's your opinion."

When you get into these areas it's like saying what art is "good"; you're getting to a point where you have a lot of disagreement. But there are certain areas where basically everybody will agree.

Graham: He started out with two hundred questions on that test. But it was pointed out that if all the experts say something is good, then that's not a test question. So they threw out some questions and they got it down to about 137 questions. Regardless, there were still some of the experts who would say, "That isn't good," and others who would say, "It is." But as an overall thing it came out as a good test.

Faria: When did they start the test?

Graham: In 1952, shortly after the book came out [Good Taste Costs No More, Doubleday, 1951]. When it was finished he made everyone in the store take it.

Equal Opportunity, Salespeople and Customers

Riess: Who were Gump's competitors for the same clients in the city?

Faria: In decorating? Basically we didn't have a lot of competitors. It wasn't that we were afraid of competition; we were in an area that they weren't. They were in their particular field, and we were in ours. Our customers wanted something special, things that were right for their particular home, and we offered a range of items, and special services where we could design a piece, or modify it, or design something new to fit their particular need. So we weren't concerned about competition. It wasn't that people could shop around and get a particular piece for a better price somewhere else. It's not that we were above it, we were just in another area, that's all.

Riess: What about the snob appeal of Gump's?

Faria: We weren't working on snob appeal, and I don't think the store does either. As a policy I never sensed that Gump's was working on snob appeal. I think that's an artificial thing. If it were there it was because it was there, not because it was planned. I don't think there was anything ever mentioned about it, and in fact I think Mr. Gump would be against it. I think that would go against the grain for him.

Riess: And was every client treated equally?

Faria: Oh, absolutely. The one thing about the store was the customers felt comfortable and they were not pushed into buying. Of course I hate that too. I hate that kind of treatment in a store, where the salesmen are all over you, bowing and scraping. It makes me want to leave. And I don't want them assessing me as to if I have the money or don't have the money. You have a lot of that with some stores where there is snob appeal and you feel uncomfortable.

The store has had people of great wealth go through there. What about the man that came in one time, he was in his jeans, his whole family was in jeans, a lot of people would look at them and say, "Well, they don't have a dime and they're here on vacation." I think the man bought jade and became a collector--don't quote me on this.

Graham: There are quite a few stories like that.

Faria: He had great wealth, and the point is, they weren't putting on the dog. They were in the store because they wanted to look around and they had the money and they were treated properly.

Riess: Did Mr. Gump speak to the salespeople to make very sure that they were democratic?

Faria: [question misunderstood] Oh, it was throughout the store. The store was made up of people from all backgrounds. Gump loved that; he loved to get a mixture of people. He had an affinity for unusual people, and a mixture of people. He was completely democratic.

Riess: Did he have black salespeople?

Faria: Oh yes, he always had a mixture. That's the thing that struck me when I came into the store was the mixture of people.

As far as the customer, there was always the commendation by people that, "I felt so comfortable, the people were very friendly." I think that was a good part of the strength of that store, the fact that they were treated in a friendly manner and not pressured to buy things. They bought what they bought because they wanted to, not because they were forced to buy something.

Graham: To break down that snob appeal, that was one of the reasons he wrote Good Taste Costs No More. That tied in with that. In the olden days, in his father's day, there was this curve of customers. You had a lot of very wealthy, and you had a lot of very poor, and a small middle ground. After the war that curve changed--this was brought out in the Amos Parrish report--and more people had jobs. So we had a very large middle group and a smaller very wealthy and a smaller very poor. So then the direction of the store had to be pointed to that middle group. That's when he started in with the motto "Good Taste Costs No More"; a $5 item or a $10,000 item, you could buy it at Gump's. He plugged away at that for years.

Faria: It was a very wise decision. We're talking about a contribution to the store which was extremely important. Mr. Gump made the trips around to give these lectures, and years and years later, fifteen and twenty years later, people would come in and say, "I saw Mr. Gump in so-and-so, and he gave such a wonderful talk." This spread, the word got out. And to say that whatever's in the store is handselected and is the best that they can get in the $5 range, the best they can get in design and quality, that points up the fact that we weren't working on snob appeal. Otherwise you'd be advertising that you have the most expensive thing you can get, and you'd only get that clientele. Snob appeal! Have you ever asked Gump about that?

Riess: No.

Graham: He constantly worked at tearing that down.

Faria: Whatever it was, it was a natural thing, it wasn't planned. If there was snob there it was because the people called it snob. The store didn't manufacture snob appeal.

To me snob is when you walk in the store and the salesman looks down his nose at you and you feel you don't belong there. And you have people who love that kind of treatment, they love all this fawning over, certain people require it. We all know people like that. And you have stores that are very successful in doing that. They don't want the average person, they want just those people who have a certain amount of dough and they're going to spend a certain amount of money. They don't care about the rest of the people. I don't think Gump's was ever like that.

Graham: Perhaps from the Oriental things and way back it might have gotten the reputation. And of course they always had the sterling silver and fine china.

Faria: It's a reputation, but I don't think the store ever worked on it. I think it would be completely negative to what Mr. Gump was thinking. I don't remember the word snob mentioned in all my time there.

Graham: At one time I. Magnin had a reputation, somewhat, for being very snobbish. Mr. Gump often mentioned that, and he definitely didn't want it. He wanted it easy for the customer to buy and that's the way he made it, right from the ground up. Little stories about the merchandise, informative leaflets enclosed with the gifts explaining about amethyst or jade or whatever it is, or Imari, or any of those things.

Little Touches, from Labelling to Morale

Faria: We had a card made specifically for the Antique Department. He wanted the prices typed on a certain typewriter to look like that card was printed in a printing press. Actually prices were being continually pulled off by people, and we were continually replacing them, and if sometimes we typed them on a regular typewriter he would bring them up. And he was right. Having that card look like it was printed for that two thousand or five thousand dollar thing made it important. And it wasn't just typed on, it had to be centered.

Graham: And on a buff-colored card.

Faria: A nice little card with a scrolled design on it. Now we're talking about attention to little details which are important. He wasn't a man for trivia, it's just that he wanted certain things to look a certain way.

Graham: He wanted good taste right down to the stationery. For instance in our red envelopes that had a "Gump's" printed up in the corner we had a white label that you could put on. Well, the secretaries had to clip off that second Gump's label so that there was just one there, so that it looked nice when it arrived. These days they slap the label on there and they've got a "Gump's" here and another "Gump's" there and it looks terrible. [laughs]

Faria: We're talking about the attention to detail coming from the top, and hiring people who can follow direction and also contribute, so that you're all working for the same thing. When you have employees at all levels enthusiastically contributing to the overall planning, you stimulate creativity and high morale. To me that was one of the strengths of the store, that everybody was involved in it, like a big family.

And there was no morale problem while Gump was there. There was no morale problem because everybody was for the same thing, and they were not scared of losing their jobs. You weren't working on fear all the time; you actually were making a contribution to the family. And Mr. Gump at the end of the year would say, "We've had a wonderful year. Please do it again next year." He didn't pressure you day by day, he just wanted that by the end of the year you'd had a good year. You work in cycles with that type of operation anyway, you'll be high and low, but when you got to the end of the year you'd have increased your sales. If you keep on pressuring people it gets to the point where you can't pressure anymore. You can't get blood out of a turnip and maintain the policy and tradition of a company. You squeeze all the creativity out of people and they're not contributing anything, they're just following directions.

Graham: His theory too was that a happy store had no one breathing down your neck; when the management treated everyone well and let them, as you say, express themselves and contribute, that relaxation filtered all the way down.

Faria: That's something I never knew; I mean, I knew it was there but she's saying that it was something that he expressed to her.

Graham: He was very much aware of that because he had some other stores in mind that he knew were pleasant places to work for all the staff, from top to bottom, and he said you could just feel it. Some years ago I remember him saying that most big stores only worked on figures as the bottom. An employer-specialist had told him the

Graham: biggest turnover in any employment in the United States is among department heads and key merchandisers, due mainly to their failure to meet projected sales figures.

Faria: You have to monitor the thing, but you have to be reasonable, and maybe you have to nurture it. If something's gone haywire, you have to know it. But you cannot maintain certain standards if you are only concerned about figures and about the bottom line. It eventually becomes a bad bottom line if you're forcing it continually. You can see it in the companies that are great one year and then sold the next.

Riess: Was there any policy about birthdays and bonuses and celebrations?

Graham: Mr. Gump always had a box of four seats since the Giants came to town. First it was at Seal Stadium, and then over at Candlestick. And he would pass out the tickets--there were a lot of people in the store who were fans.

Faria: But we didn't have a lot of picnics or things. It was a family, but not to where everybody was doing social things.

Graham: When you went to work you were a family, but when you left everyone went their own way.

Riess: What about bonuses for a good year?

Graham: For buyers I know there was some kind of bonus arrangement. For the rank and file it was just straight salaries. The salespeople had a commission basis, based on whatever the union at that time specified. Then if department did especially well they had a system for rewarding the buyers.

The Notebooks and the Buying Trips, 1960 and 1964

Riess: I see that you are a great sketcher, Mr. Faria. You and Mr. Gump must have kept busy with your notebooks on those buying trips.

Faria: That was very valuable actually. On those trips we were buying so many different single items, and first of all you wanted to know that they'd shipped and you'd gotten what you purchased. I referred to those books continually.

Riess: Both of you kept notebooks.

Faria: Yes. I did it for my setup, and he did it to for all of his trips, and he made at least one trip a year to Europe. I went on two three-month trips with him, in '60 and '64 and he showed me how he made his trips. That was a valuable piece of information. It was a learning experience in how to handle a trip.

Riess: Did he set up everything from San Francisco, all his meetings?

Faria: Yes. Over the years you find your sources. You learn that certain areas are good for certain things. So you know what your trip is going to be. By the time I got involved we had a pretty well-established source of contacts. Of course we never knew. Sometimes we'd go and find two things, sometimes twenty things. You'd never know. Sometimes the day before a decorator might have come in and bought the whole shop, or you could go for days and not find a thing, and then all of a sudden you get a find and it's all good.

Riess: What fun!

Faria: It is fun. Sometimes you're saying, oh God! and then you get to the end of a trip and you don't want to leave because you're on a roll. And sometimes you don't know, you think a price is high but you find out later in the trip that that was a very cheap price. So you have to balance it out.

Riess: This is with antiques.

Faria: Yes. With antiques. From one year to the next it can change radically.

Riess: Did you learn to bargain from Mr. Gump?

Faria: No, no you can't mess around with that. You look at the thing and say, "Okay, I want your best price." You don't want to fuss around, and you know in certain things what your limit is. The price is based mostly on how much you buy. The dealer gives you a price, and you know he's not making a fortune.

The dealers over there don't make the kind of markup that we do. They buy at auction and put it on the floor and make ten or twenty percent, so they don't have a lot to play with. You know that. The dealer will say, "Let me know what you're going to buy." If you buy say twenty thousand or ten thousand or whatever he makes you a price based on what you're buying. But you don't really get a much better price than just anybody walking in. They don't have wholesale and retail. They're little shops and it's based on the quantity that you buy. You can't go through the hassle of dickering with these people. It's wearing.

Graham: I got the idea Mr. Gump wasn't much interested in bargaining anyway.

Faria: No, he's not that type. He's not the type that would stand there and dicker with someone.

Riess: What did you do at night on the buying trips?

Faria: We stayed at good hotels and we ate at the best places. That was part of the trip, it was part of the routine. And of course I was with the boss, so I went along with it and it was fine! [laughs] I was lucky.

Graham: You went back to the hotel at night and wrote purchase orders, didn't you?

Faria: Oh yes, we weren't partying. In fact we drove many times until eight or nine at night. And of course you don't stop at some hamburger place, so sometimes we had to do without dinner because we drove too long. And then in France everything closes up; they just don't stay open.

Riess: Did he take you to museums?

Faria: Oh yes, that was the learning process. He enjoyed it and he could look at a thing and tell you all about it. He had a tremendous wealth of information. In all these things, he had an interest and he had exposure to them his whole life. He loved it. He was interested in what people were thinking and doing and how they did it.

He had a very inquisitive mind. And he had a great love for history. He was a scholar! And he could remember. He could pull things out of the air that he might not have thought about for twenty years. When he was a kid he loved the soldiers and he loved battles and he loved history. He could tell you about battles and why they did it and how they did it and who did what. And he was always very interesting. He didn't repeat himself a lot. He would always have a new angle and a new experience. He's had so many experiences that he can always pull out of his mind something that you've never heard before.

Riess: Did he sketch when he visited museums?

Faria: He might, if it pleased him. He might have his book and be doing something and all of a sudden it's not just a quick sketch, it becomes more, because he enjoys what he's doing. He has a talent.

Riess: And then he might have that piece of furniture, for instance, made here?

Faria: Oh no, it's for identification. I'll cover that quickly because you want to know about it. When we'd go to a place and see a chair we'd make a quick sketch of it--a few seconds, to pick out the prime

Faria: features of that chair for identification. And then when it is received you see you got what you purchased. Then when you're selling a thing--I used my book continuously and I could say, "Oh, yeah, we got this in Udine." That was something he indoctrinated me in and it was a useful tool. He did that every trip. I think that was a part of his job that he enjoyed. I don't know if somebody trained him in that.

Graham: I think he said that Stanley Corcoran started it, but Mr. Gump amplified it, I'm sure.

Faria: In sketching, if I were to do this table, all you need is the top and leg, and you've got the whole thing.

Riess: And did you photograph too?

Faria: He did a lot of picture-taking and in some cases we took a lot of pictures. A lot of times you had to identify the piece by a photograph. But the prime reference was the notebook. You must have, what, twenty of them, Mrs. Graham?

Graham: Oh yes.

Riess: Did you come across other buyers on those trips? Did he have pals in the business who were out after the same stuff?

Faria: No, we rarely came across people he knew, people from the trade. I don't recall any we even bumped into.

Riess: On those trips in 1960 and 1964 was it just furniture he was after, or was he looking for all the departments?

Faria: He was looking for a lot of things. I think it was in '60 we went down to Italy and we were looking for chinaware. I wasn't involved in that but I was with him on the trip. That was a good background experience. Then we looked for silver when I went with him. We were together--well, we were together all day long.

Riess: Did you attend musical performances when you traveled together?

Faria: Yes, but not a lot. We were real busy. It's a lot of work, a trip like that. It's not a social thing. We stayed at the very fine places and we shot for the finest of everything, the best of shops. Everything was the best, the finest we could find.

Riess: Did he come back with ideas for redesigning whole departments of Gump's from the trips? Or was it mainly just specific objects to sell or reproduce?

Faria: Oh, he went every year, and yes, I'm sure that some of the things he saw along the way might have sparked some ideas. But on the trips I went on with him I never had any knowledge of that.

A Friendship, in the Store and in the Band

Riess: I take it he wears well. That's a long time with your boss.

Faria: Well, you have to adapt. If I couldn't get along with him I couldn't take it. You couldn't take it with anybody! But I understood him. And Mrs. Graham couldn't work with him for so long.

Graham: You both have senses of humor.

Faria: It's like any marriage, you have to be able to give and take. And then, when the chips are down, he remains the boss. I wasn't afraid of him, I told him what I thought. And of course he also drew on my experience, my technical background, so it tied together.

I got to know him very well on those trips. It was much easier to discuss policies and future plans for my department away from the store in a more relaxed atmosphere. Also, having him involved with the buying and planning for my department helped in gaining support where I needed it. Our trips to the different European furniture manufacturers gave me a clearer picture of their capabilities and their limitations.

Having made two three-month buying trips with Mr. Gump not only gave me the opportunity to know him better, but through his wealth of experience, gave me a chance to broaden my personal background. The trips were extremely valuable and two of my most memorable experiences.

Riess: The two of you also have music in common, don't you? How did Mr. Gump discover that you were a fellow musician?

Faria: Well, he checked the background, he knew the background of everybody when he hired them.

Riess: And he called on you when he was putting the Guckenheimer Band together?

Faria: He said, "Can you play with us?" And at that time I couldn't, I was in the union. Then they were asked to make a record, and to make the record they had to join the union, and as soon as that happened he said, "Will you work with us?" And I said, "Sure."

It was a goofy band. I'd think, "Geez, how can I put on this uniform and go out there and act like a boob?" you know. But I remember the first job I played with him was up in Mill Valley. It was fun and the people really enjoyed it and I said, "I really like this." People really loved that band, it was universal; kids and older people, they all loved it. From then on we played dozens and dozens of jobs, for a number of years.

When Gump couldn't make it I took over the band. We worked continually. We were on a number of tv shows. We put on concerts all over the place, even the Opera House [opening night, October 1, 1962]. It was an incredible group. Actually we could have put that on the road and made a complete career of that. It was far out at that time when we first started. Nobody was running around with funny costumes; everybody was conservative at that time.

His music has been a very important part of his life, all the way from the time he was a very young person. He's had schooling in composition, he's a serious composer. He is still composing, continually. As far as his creativity now, it's in music. He has a tremendous knowledge of the opera.

And he had always, as I say, been serious about his music. Even the German band. He arranged for the band; he studied the sounds of the old village German band, and the arrangements were made that way. We doctored up the arrangements. We reversed some of the parts to make it sound a particular way. He really worked at it. He spent a lot of time rehearsing and arranging and planning for this thing, even though it was goofy.

Riess: What do you think the importance of the group was for Mr. Gump?

Faria: It indicated his range of interests. Here was a serious musician-composer, and yet he loved that German band. It has to do with his humor. He thought it was funny and he knew people thought it was funny, and he was right. He had that sense of knowing what people would like. He liked things that were unusual and at that time that was unusual.

Riess: It was some kind of outlet.

Faria: I think so. He really loved that band and enjoyed playing with it. He didn't need that band--he was a well-established executive of a store--but it was part of his life.

Riess: Do you think that being a well-established executive of a store was a part of his life that he enjoyed as well?

Faria: I don't think he could avoid enjoying it because it was part of his heritage, the family and the rest of it.

Riess: That's a reason he might not enjoy it.

Faria: I think it was a big responsibility to take over but he did it well. I think he did a tremendous job. In my experience the twenty-some years I was with him, I think that he did an incredible job. He was an excellent executive, he could leave the store and it ran exactly the same way as when he was there. That was because you knew the guidelines and because he allowed you to operate your department as your own, like your own business. He didn't need any monitoring, he didn't need people checking you. The figures would indicate what was going on. He knew that you would follow the quality and the--not the rules so much as what the store stood for. That made it simple for him to leave.

Riess: [to Graham] Was Paul an unusual department head?

Faria: I could answer that. I think they're all handpicked and everybody had that same sense. In my experience they all had the same sense. Otherwise he wouldn't have gotten the results. And I see people now, they look back and say, "That was quite a place!"

Mine was kind of a special thing. It was not just buying and selling, it was more involved with designing and the rest of it. But I think all the people had the same sense of freedom.

Riess: Did he have a second in command?

Graham: No. Like an understudy or something? He had a vice-president and a secretary-treasurer who was the controller of the store, and of course he worked very closely with them.

Riess: How did the vice-president function?

Graham: Well, he was the head of the Oriental Antiques Department and over the Jewelry Department. He worked very closely with the controller. Of course that was more to do with the figures and things because the controller never entered into the merchandising part of the business. But no, he didn't have an understudy, and that could havebeen one of the reasons that he eventually sold the store, one of the things that contributed to it.

Faria: Of course that was one of the unusual things because you didn't have what would be considered a normal structure, you didn't have a general this and a special that, all these special echelons of people that you had to go through. You could talk to the boss. You

Faria: were continually working with Mr. Gump. You can't do that with every company. Most companies are not set up that way. He allowed you enough freedom, you didn't have to consult him. You knew what to do. Only on special points did you have to check with him--or go through Mrs. Graham to see Mr. Gump to go over it with him. But not to check your daily operation or your monthly operation. If there was anything wrong he would come down and he'd talk to you.

I've had experience the other way too where you have to ask to go to the restroom! To get a day off you have to go through five people! Structures where the management is taken out of the control of the department, where the manager can't even manage anymore. There's a big difference, and we're talking about costs, about quality, about control, about everything. Big structures kill contributions by people that are part of the structure. But there are certain organizations that you have to run that way because there are so many people. You have to have discipline in an organization. You can't run an army on the basis of everybody thinking what he wants to think and doing what he wants to do.

The Store Brochure

Riess: When you were at the store was the catalog responsible for many sales, or was it more a lure to get people into the store?

Faria: It served the two purposes. The catalog was an excellent tool because it was such a good catalog. Just the quality of the catalog would indicate it was not the run-of-the-mill order house; it was a store and the catalog represented the quality of the store. So you had people who would definitely come in because they saw something in the catalog. Not only did they do that, but they also ordered from the catalog.

Riess: Did people order furniture from the catalog?

Faria: Yes. Well, furniture is not a catalog item. We sold a lot from the catalog, but small things. We had some silk tassels we got from Europe and that became a gift item. We sold thousands of them. Incredible! I made up a little package of wax for furniture. It was just wax but I put it in a box and made it a gift, and we sold lots of those. Furniture's not a catalog item but we might have something in there and they would see it and come in, and that would

Faria: stimulate a sale in our department. But not as a catalog item. It was usually related to something else. A chair, a dining chair, you have to see the table and the rest of it. We always had a a very beautiful display of things. It was mostly a promotional thing, a good picture of a dining room. Someone would see it in the catalog and come in, and from that we might make quite a few thousand dollars.

Graham: Since I have been at the store we have always gotten out one brochure--or catalog, but I think they didn't like to call it a catalog--and it came out in the fall, usually, so it was used for Christmas. And then throughout the year they would send it out to people who opened accounts. If customers hadn't been all through the store they could see what else was available. We had one a year for a long time; now the store has several a year.

Riess: We're coming to the end of the tape, Mr. Faria. Summing up, what do you think Richard Gump's great strengths were?

Faria: For the store, he was the right person for the job at that time, and he did a tremendous job. The time he was there, what he did, his style, and how he ran the store was right for the store. It is proven by the success of that store. If he had been the wrong person, the store wouldn't have made it. He came in at a time when things were changing after the war and he was the glue that held that thing together. Because he was creative he would not be assessed as the regular kind of executive, but the store didn't require "the regular kind of executive," it required an unusual person. And he filled the need. And for me it was a very fulfilling, exciting time of my life. I felt I was contributing and the store was an excellent place to be.

For me, my time at the store with him was the most stimulating part of my career. Among the things I learned from him was that you don't do things by revolution, you do them by evolution. Another thing he believed was keeping the image of the store, not messing around with it. He said it was like a fighter, "Adapt and change."

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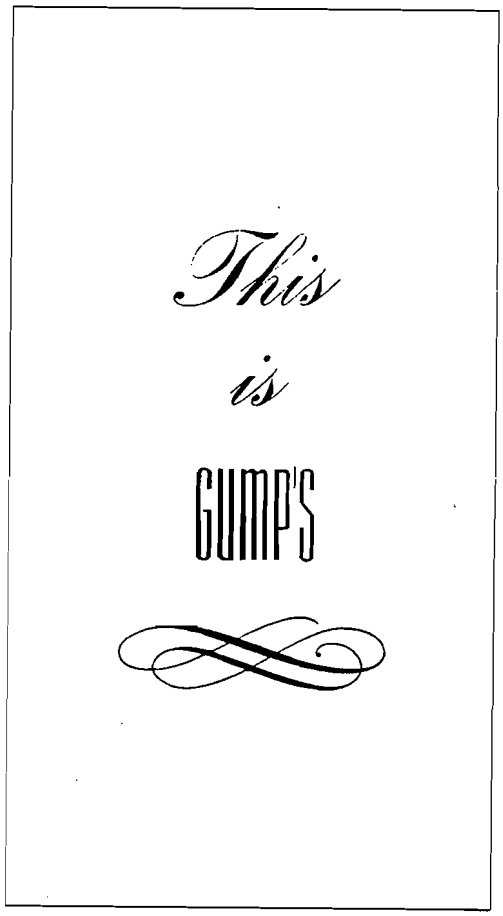


THIS IS GUMP'S

Gump's of San Francisco is a legend in a legendary city. Nearly 100 years old, this unique establishment has a world reputation as a mecca for lovers of fine art. A tour of Gump's is a must for the discriminating tourist.

Behind the doors of this famed Post Street store is treasure literally worth the ransom of kings: Imperial jade, period silver, paintings by modern masters, the finest of crystal and porcelain.

The firm was founded by Solomon Gump in 1861, during California's roaring gold-rush days. Gump provided mirrors for San Francisco's saloons, and picture frames and gilded cornices for the mansions of the newly-rich.

As San Francisco grew, Solomon's trading instincts and his love of art enabled him to broaden his stock-in-trade. Before the century was out, the company was selling pictures to go with the frames, and Solomon was making periodic trips to Europe in search of art for his wealthy patrons.

Into this climate of culture came Solomon's son, A. Livingston Gump, who inherited the store on the death of his father. All of the firm's stock was destroyed in the earthquake that struck San Francisco in 1906, but "A. L." Gump was determined to rebuild. His perseverance was rewarded, and under his direction the store was greatly expanded. Soon he turned to the Orient for articles to meet the demands of his increasing clientele, and Gump's was embarked on an adventure with the Far East that was to establish the store as a world authority on Oriental art.

Impressed with the great beauty of the Asian art pouring into the store, A. L. undertook a spectacular remodeling job. Skilled artisans were imported from China and Japan to construct a series of Oriental rooms to show off the new treasure. Under their hands grew the rooms which were to make Gump's a "must-see" in San Francisco . . . the Tansu Room, the Jade Room, the Lotus Room.

A. L. was an extraordinary man. Nearly blind for the greater part of his life, it is said that he could determine the value of a jade carving by touch; his amazing memory enabled him to fix in his mind the description and location of nearly every article in the store. His glowing accounts of things he could see, but dimly, often impressed customers as much as the objects themselves.

Under his 40 years of guidance, A. L. provided the spirit that caused the store to develop until Gump's is now a byword for a marriage of the familiar and the exotic, the Occident and the Orient.

Gump's is headed now by A. L.'s son, Richard. An artist-designer as well as a merchant, this third-generation president has broadened the scope of the store to include the arts and crafts of Mexico, Africa, and the South Seas, and the work of contemporary American and European artists. "One can never know where

Hundreds of European and American accessories are displayed in the Gift Department.

a new or interesting craft or concept may be found," says Richard Gump. "This is a challenge always before us."

His best-selling book, *"Good Taste Costs No More,"* provided the store with its well-known slogan. The esthetic value of an object, notes the author, does not necessarily lie in its method of manufacture, its age, its cost, or its geographic origin. This philosophy of esthetics and design is graphically demonstrated in the merchandise handled by Gump's.

"Beauty pays dividends," says Richard Gump. He makes this observation from a lifetime of study in the arts, crafts, and languages of many lands; the increasing demand for the dazzling array of wares in the store is evidence of the truth of this statement.

The technique of merchandise and window display for which the store is famous carries out the President's philosophy. Simply and strikingly arranged are articles that may range from $5 to $5,000, from Bavarian wood-carvings to Buddhist sculptures.Gump's is not a huge store, but one is impressed with the planning and consideration that has been given to featuring merchandise, in the pleasing order of displays, table settings, furnished rooms, and special floor arrangements.

That is part of the Gump's story . . . the rest is in the store itself, and on its three treasure-laden floors.

A collection of jade carvings unrivalled in the world lies behind locked cabinets in the JADE ROOM. For such pieces of jade, which may range in price from $25 to $25,000, the kings of Asia waged wars and ravaged cities. But in the serenity of this room, visitors may view these Stones of Heaven in quiet leisure.

In the ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT are objects of antiquity, from grave pieces of the T'ang dynasty to exquisitely carved and tinted ivory figurines. Unusual Oriental furniture and silken scrolls are on display, along with superbly carved and painted screens, and stone garden sculpture. Here also is the only article in the store marked "Not For Sale". . . a colossal Tibetan Buddha, serene and enigmatic.

But not all of the story lies in the exotic past of Asia.

Much of the character that has made Gump's known as "the world's most unusual store" lies in the firm's

Center of interest in Gump's Oriental Department is this colossal 18th Century Tibetan Buddha.

persistent search throughout the globe for things of beauty, from tea sets to temple bells, casseroles to crystal balls, Indian brocades to antique English silver. Buyers comb the continents in search of merchandise suitable for the store's distinctive taste, and the determination of these treasure-traders has added many an adventurous footnote to the Gump legend: once, a buyer waited 10 patient months in Peking, simply to obtain a rare pair of ancient bowls. Other Gump's agents range far off the beaten paths, from Madrid to Mindanao, in search of the unusual.

Each department adds to the flavor of the store. Richard Gump maintains that good taste permits the successful mixing of furniture and art objects from various periods and countries. The versatile consultants in the INTERIOR DESIGN DEPARTMENT are nationally known for the creation of this effect, and are adept at devising interiors which express the personality of the individual. The department's design studios produce Gump-designed furniture available nowhere else.

Display of stone garden sculpture on third floor.

Gump's Fashion Room presents leisure clothes and custom-designed gowns, using fabrics from all over the world.

Just off the Oriental Department is the FASHION ROOM. In dramatic settings are shown custom-created originals, designed and produced in the store's own work-rooms, in fabrics ranging from one-of-a-kind Indian cottons to old tribute silks presented by the Mandarins to their emperors.

GUMP'S ART GALLERY contributes to the store's diversity. A staff of experts, several of them artists in their own right, arranges monthly exhibitions of the best of contemporary paintings and sculpture. It is rare indeed when a show does not receive high praise from art critics.

The store is a recognized authority on modern and antique silver; the finest work of European and American silversmiths is in the second floor SILVER ROOM. Selections in this vast array of silver range from contemporary bowls to 300-year-old spoons.

On the second floor also is the EUROPEAN ANTIQUES DEPARTMENT, where an outstanding display of fine furniture creates a unique Old World atmosphere in the heart of bustling San Francisco.

In the CHINA AND GLASS DEPARTMENT is the largest selection of patterns in the West. Famous Ginori china from Italy, Wedgwood, Spode, Rosenthal and Lenox are among the more than 250 patterns; over 150 stemware designs are in the glass section, including Irish Waterford, a Gump exclusive in San Francisco. The store is proud of being the Northern California representative for Steuben glass.

The LINEN DEPARTMENT offers a great variety of exclusive weaves and embroideries. Here are fabrics from the Philippines, Ireland, Switzerland, Madiera, Italy, in an exciting palette of colors, many of them woven exclusively for Gump's.

Part of the second floor Collector's Room featuring European Antiques.

The Jewel Room is famous for its Gump-designed jewelry at all prices, including culture pearls and jade.

This, then, is Gump's: a treasure house . . . one of the world's most cosmopolitan stores in one of the world's most cosmopolitan cities. This is probably the only store on earth where under one roof it is possible to buy a Chinese bronze believed to be 30 centuries old, an early Scottish tankard, the Continental Army in exact miniature, or a contemporary Danish dining table.

On Gump's first floor, looking from the Oriental Gifts Department into the Lamp Studio.

The first floor ORIENTAL GIFT DEPARTMENT offers unusual Japanese porcelains and lacquers, Persian copper and imported brass and bronze accessories.

On the first floor is the GIFT DEPARTMENT, with a selection of merchandise gathered from the five continents: Eskimo carvings, chess sets in Italian marble, contemporary mosaic ashtrays from Germany.

The LAMP DEPARTMENT, also on the first floor, is unique in the United States. The store operates its own lamp studio staffed by lighting experts who create individualized lamps from bases and shade materials gathered from worldwide sources.

The intriguing JEWEL ROOM offers jade, culture pearls especially selected for the store, jewelry in semi-precious stones, rings, bracelets, and necklaces at all prices to five figures.

You're invited to linger, to browse, to hunt down a bargain, to invest in something precious. We welcome every visitor. So that we may keep in touch with you, ask the nearest salesperson to put your name on our mailing list. Then you'll be sure to know of our latest finds, in our never-ending search for the unusual and the beautiful.

FIRST FLOOR
- Gift Department
- Oriental Gift Department
- Jewel Room
- Lamps
- Bar Accessories
- Stationery

SECOND FLOOR
- Silver Room
- European Antiques
- Steuben Glass Room
- China and Glass
- Bridal Registry
- Linens

THIRD FLOOR
- Oriental Department
- Jade Room
- Paintings, Prints, Framing
- Fashion Room
- Interior Design Department
- Offices

GUMP'S 250 POST STREET • SAN FRANCISCO • YUKON 2-1616

From file of GUMP'S Merchandising Principles

October 31, 1944

TO ALL EMPLOYEES:

It has been six months, now, since I assumed the position and responsibility of being general manager of Gump's. This is my first opportunity to thank you for the sincere and thoughtful cooperation I feel you have given me.

During these months. I have tried to establish a policy of operation. This policy is the large degree of freedom and independence never before granted the department heads. The reason is obvious - to encourage and stimulate their potential. This will, in turn, unify the efforts and relations between them and the persons working under them, so that we will all be working with a single viewpoint.

Remember that no single department is responsible for the success of the store. It is the sum of the efforts of all of our departments and all of our employees. The success of one department brings success to the others. I am not attempting to accomplish my objectives overnight. I have a plan and I am relying on you to make it a reality. Anyone not in accord with or lacking the understanding of my plan serves no useful purpose in the organization.

There are three things that are my goals to be kept in mind at all times:

A. Good taste
B. Originality whenever possible
C. Knowledge of merchandise

It matters not whether the item is a $2.50 ash tray or a $10,000 jade necklace, the Gump label or wrapping should identify it as an item of flawless taste. Good taste is such an intangible, it will have to be left to my discretion as final judge. To strengthen our reputation, I would rather lose sales than have our customers regret a purchase.

As to originality, we want, we encourage, we insist on new ideas, creative and colorful designs. Any suggestions you have for merchandising or new merchandise, now or after the war, will be greatly appreciated. New and original ideas are not only welcome - they're imperative. As you are all aware, after the war the competition will be so keen that we can't afford to ever put ourselves in the position of copying

another merchant, we must be one jump ahead of him in display, advertising, merchandise and all phases of the business.

To sell well we must have a knowledge of the goods we sell. Each sales-person, each department head, should be thoroughly and enthusiastically conversant with all the items in his department. They must know and appreciate the purpose and the design of their stock and be able to transmit their enthusiasm to their customers. A person ignorant of or apathetic to the merits of his goods can do little to stimulate a desire for possession of them.

We must not let things stay too long in stock. This causes the establishment to be looked upon as a museum. We want a constant change, not only in style, ahead of competitors, but new and constantly changing items.

It will be my job to further co-ordinate the activities of our various departments, to direct the flow of our creative efforts, to keep our advertising and publicity abreast of store developments, to manage as to the spirit of the merchandise and its presentation.

May I repeat my main goals - good taste, originality and knowledge of merchandise - and thank you again for your past cooperation. May you be so in sympathy with my three aims that your cooperation in the future will be automatic.

/s/ Richard B. Kemp

General Manager

GUMP'S DESIGN TEST

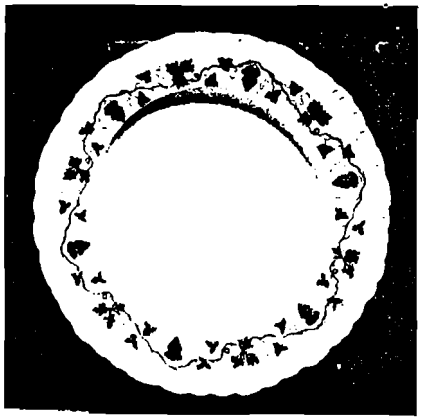
Through experience we have found that our complete Design Test is an excellent measurement of people's design judgment. What's your answer to this sampling of 52 items from the test?

Of its type, is the design of each item good or bad? (rather than would you like to own it yourself.)

Your answers will be weighed against the decisions of nationally-recognized design experts. Be encouraged -- we've found it impossible for anyone to agree 100% with the experts.

Enclosed with the test is a sheet to check your choice of GOOD or BAD design. Later in the program we'll give you the answers by number.

Richard Gump
President
GUMP'S, San Francisco



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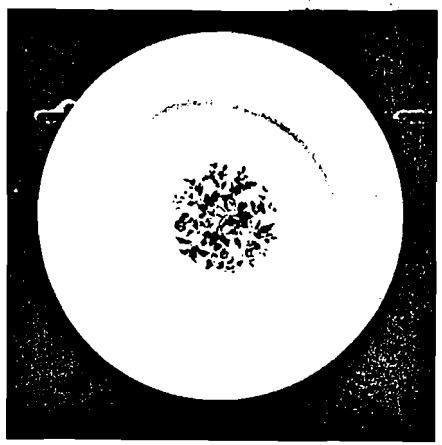

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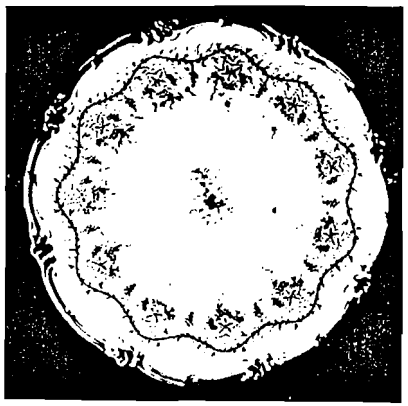

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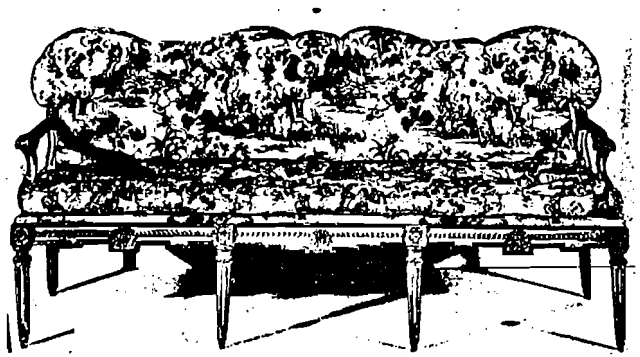

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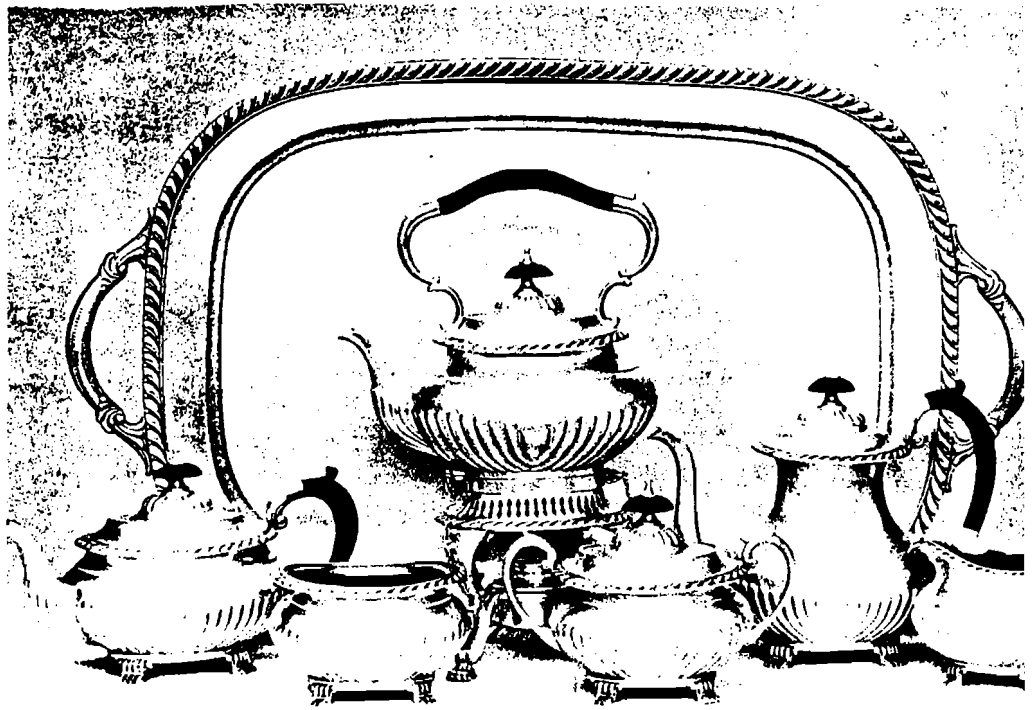

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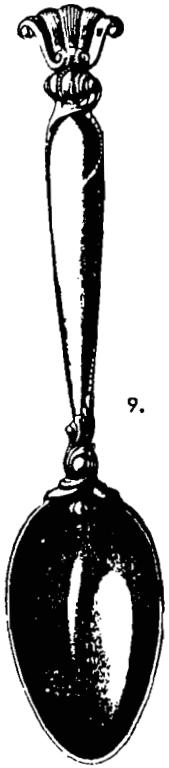

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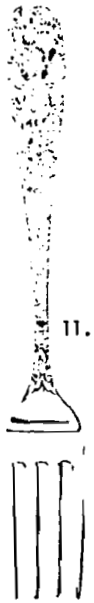

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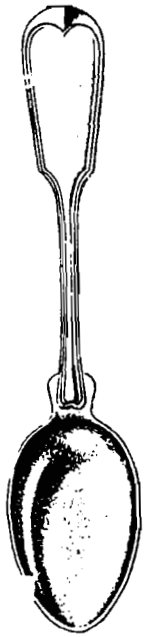

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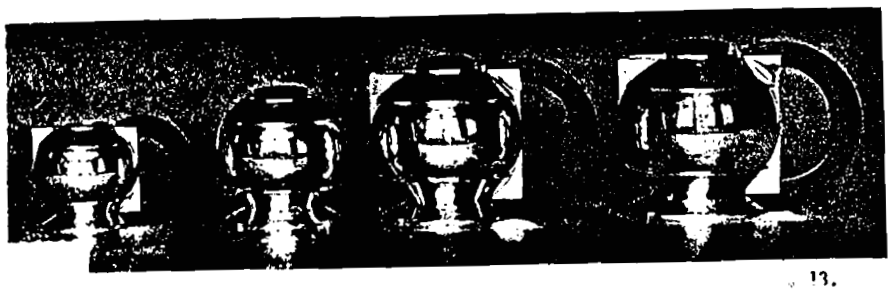

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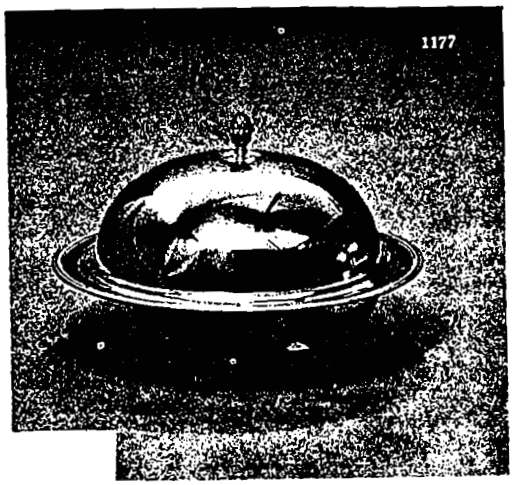

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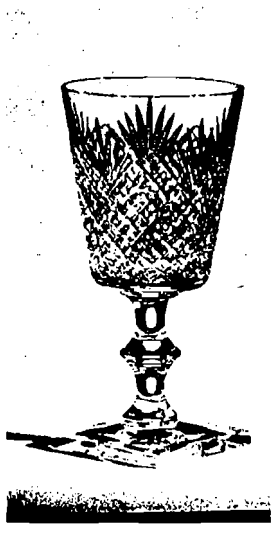

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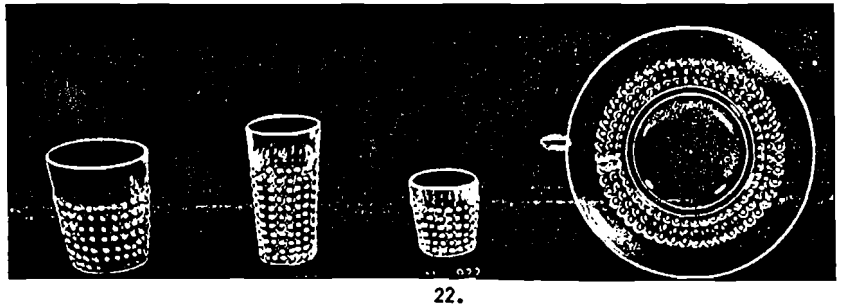

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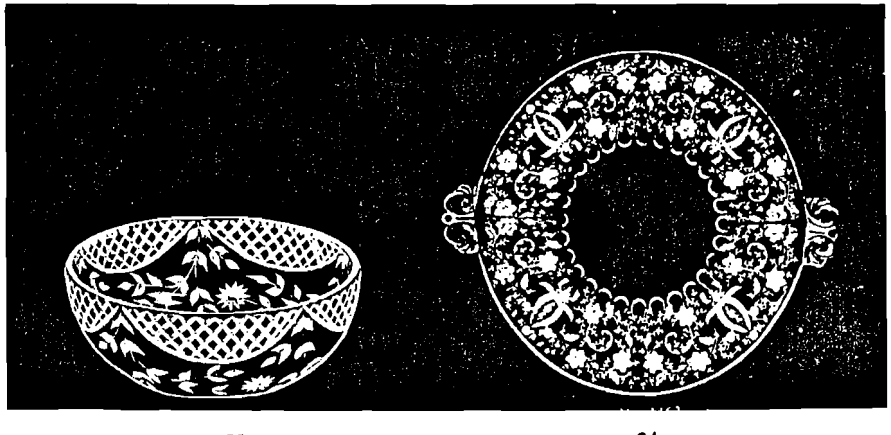

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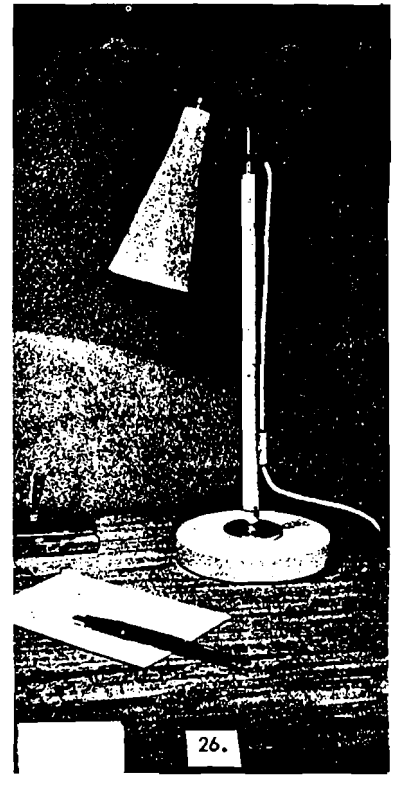

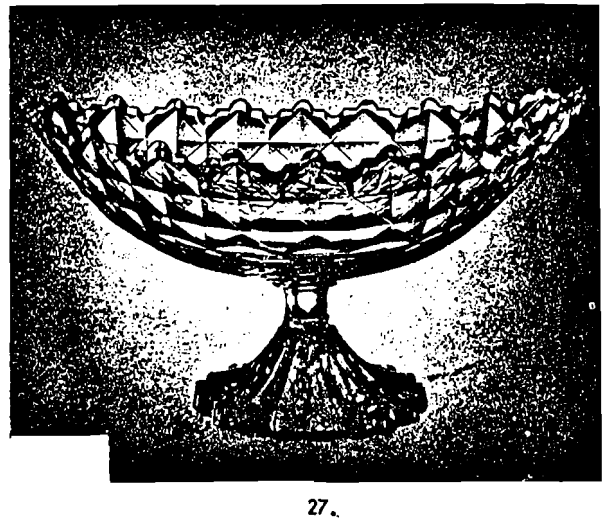

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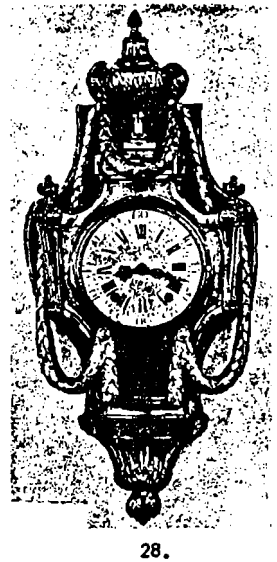

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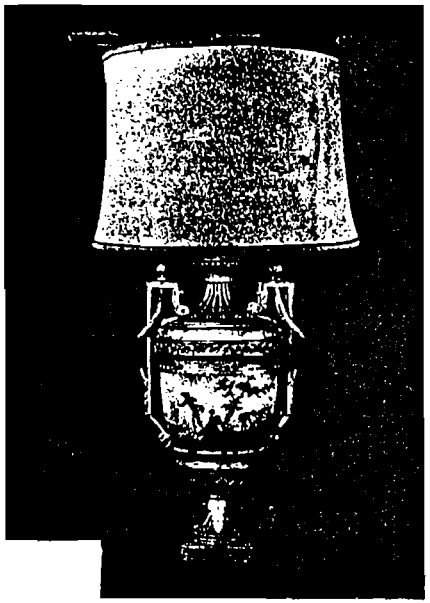

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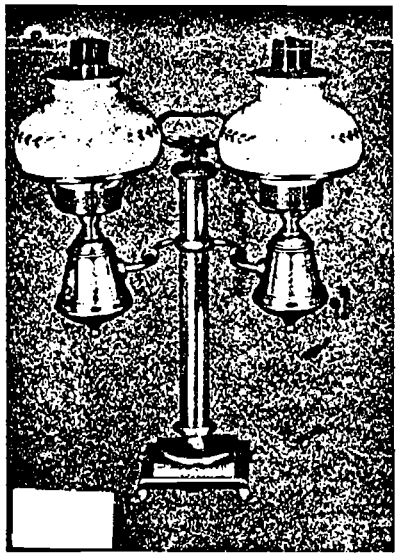

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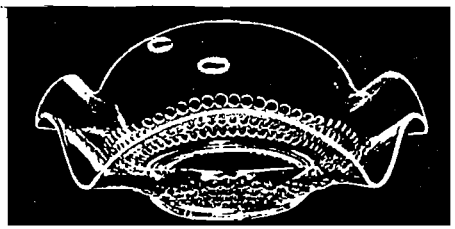

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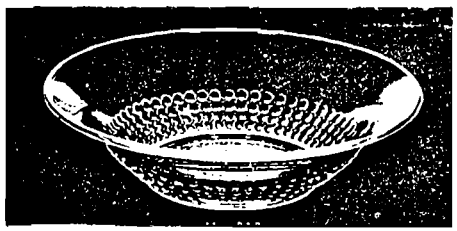

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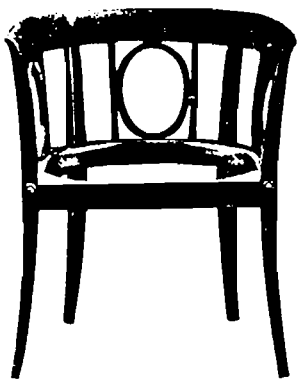

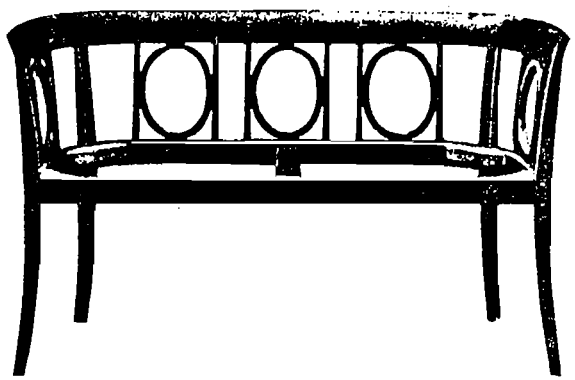

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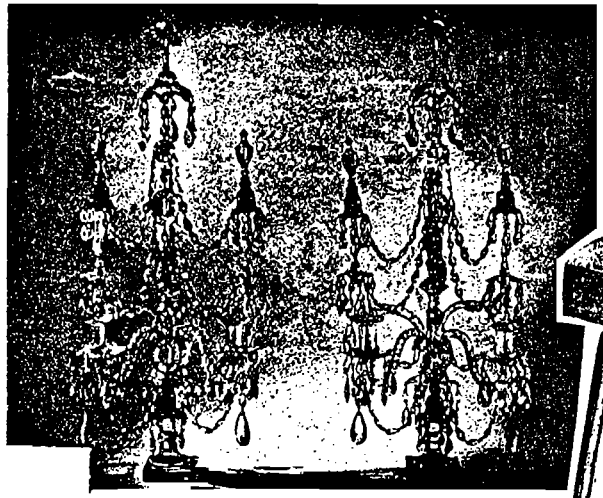

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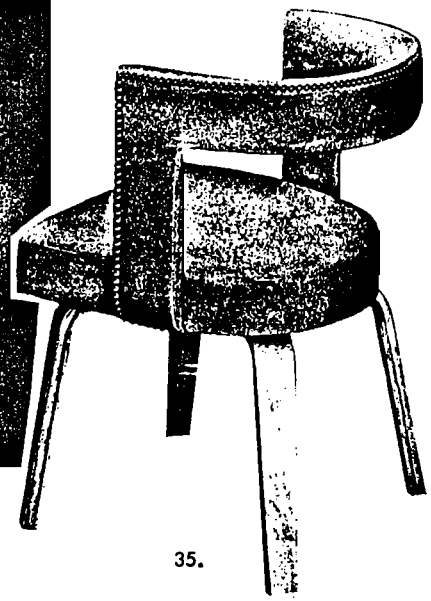

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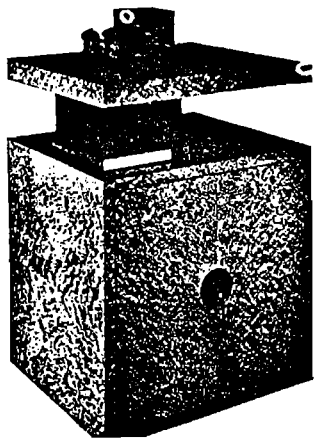

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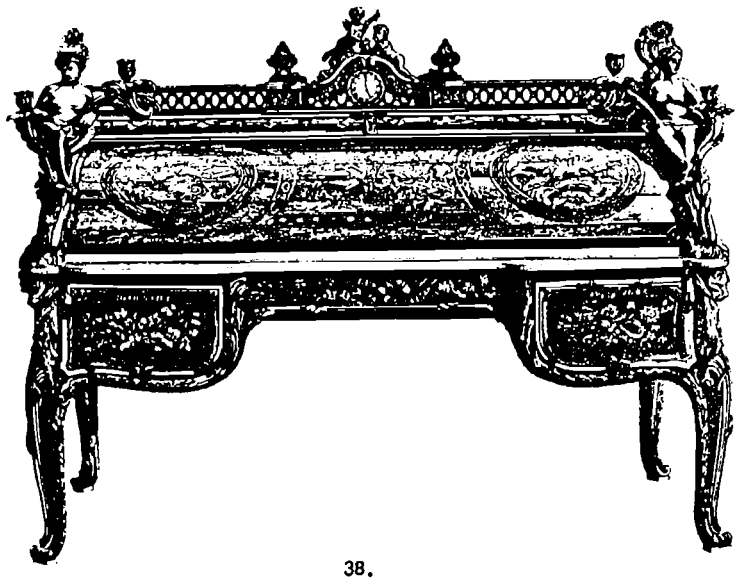

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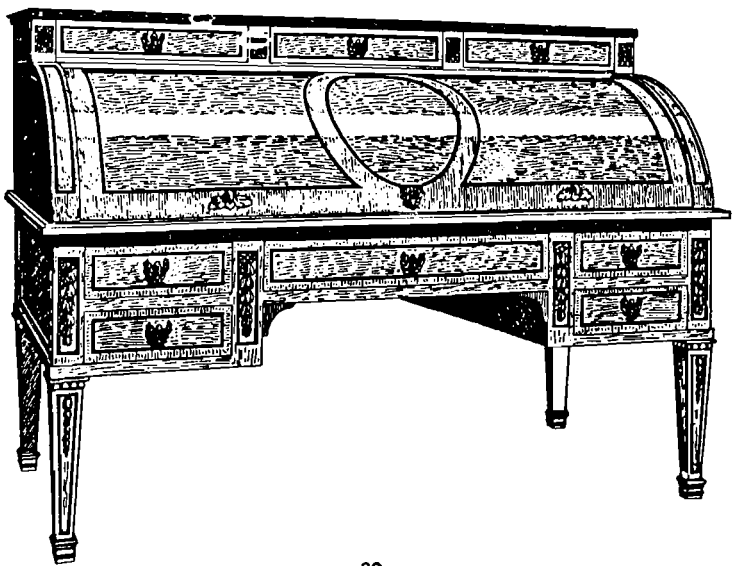

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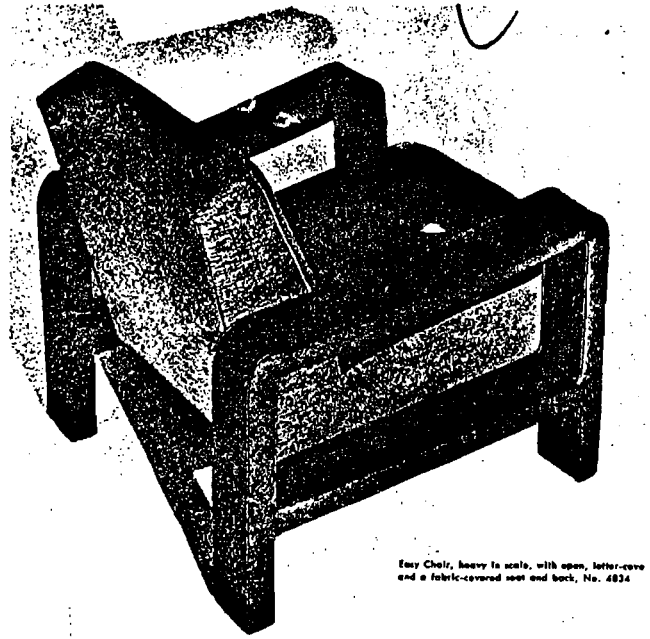

Easy Chair, heavy to scale, with open, letter-cove and a fabric-covered seat and back, No. 4834

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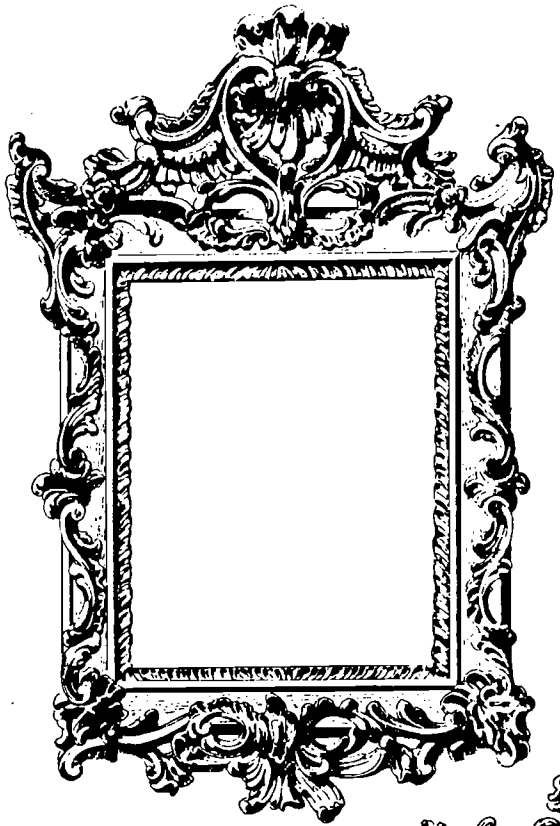

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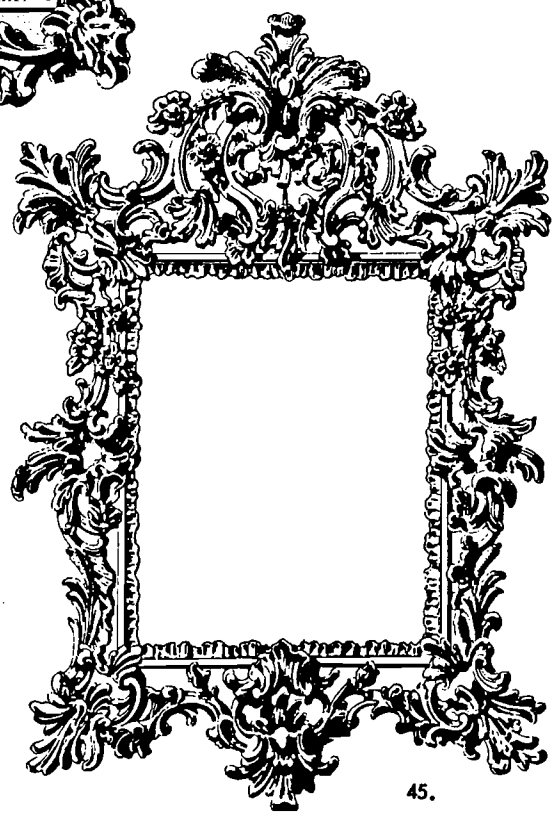

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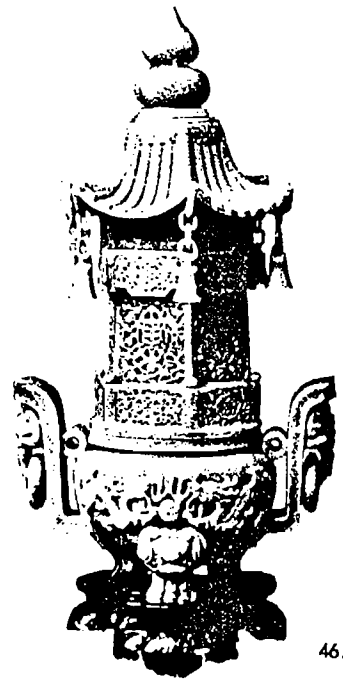

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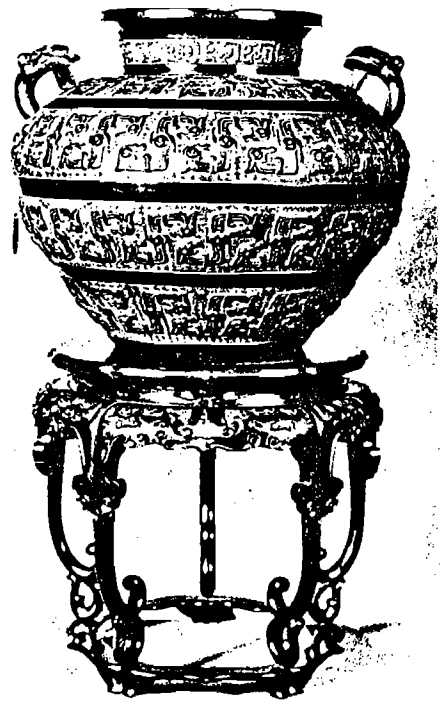

49.

CHECK
YOUR
CHOICE (X) Name:

Good	Bad	Good	Bad	Good	Bad
1	1	18	18	35	35
2	2	19	19	36	36
3	3	20	20	37	37
4	4	21	21	38	38
5	5	22	22	39	39
6	6	23	23	40	40
7	7	24	24	41	41
8	8	25	25	42	42
9	9	26	26	43	43
10	10	27	27	44	44
11	11	28	28	45	45
12	12	29	29	46	46
13	13	30	30	47	47
14	14	31	31	48	48
15	15	32	32	49	49
16	16	33	33		
17	17	34	34		

KEY

CHECK
YOUR
CHOICE (X) Name:

Good	Bad	Good	Bad	Good	Bad
1	1	18	18	35	35
2	2	19	~~19~~	36	36
3	3	20	20	37	37
4	4	21	21	38	38
5	5	22	22	39	39
6	6	23	23	40	40
7	7	24	24	41	41
8	8	25	25	42	42
9	9	26	26	43	~~43~~
10	10	27	27	44	44
11	11	28	28	45	45
12	12	29	29	46	46
13	13	30	30	47	47
14	14	31	31	48	48
15	15	32	32	49	49
16	16	33	33		
17	17	34	34		

Both good unless we say to choose.

12 or under } Excellent
13-17 - GOOD
18-22 - AVERAGE
23 or more - Don't Hire

It's Time for Taste

By Richard Gump

Manufacturers, Buyers and Salespeople "Proudly Parade Extreme Ignorance of the Fundamental Demands of Style and Good Design as Evidenced by Most of the Products to Which They Devote Their Lives"

EVERY day thousands of crimes are committed in this country — with the criminals escaping scot-free!

These crimes go unpunished because the perpetrators and their victims alike are ignorant of any wrongdoing. Many indeed take a naive pride in their misdeeds — demonstrating an ignorance that combines lack of understanding and a truly monumental spiritual and mental laziness.

Evidence of these crimes is, unfortunately, all about us. It may be seen daily in most of the homes and stores of the United States.

What are these crimes? Bluntly, they are crimes against good taste. They include an amazing percentage of all manufactured china, glassware, decorative objects, lamps, silver, rugs and furniture sold in United States stores.

Who are the "criminals"? The average manufacturer of these monstrosities and his "accomplices." These accomplices are buyers, who, in turn, have trained, as additional accomplices, their salespeople. Together they proudly parade extreme ignorance of the fundamental demands of style and good design as evidenced by most of the products to which they devote their lives. As a result, United States retail stores display some of the most atrocious visual distortions ever dignified by the name of merchandise.

Who are the victims? Mr. and Mrs. Public, who helplessly accept what is given them and unwittingly perpetuate the cycle.

Happily, there are isolated exceptions: Manufacturers and retailers who respect their obligations and the dignity of their calling. But for the industry as a whole, the simple facts require a blanket indictment.

How some manufacturers of home furnishings and "decorative" accessories achieved "success" in businesses for which they are so patently unsuited, is a mystery. In every other field, a manufacturer must have a thorough knowledge of his product as well as its eventual use. Certainly, if an automobile manufacturer were equally ignorant of his product, he would be forced out of the industry in a short time. The fact that he stays in business and is successful bespeaks either a thorough knowledge of engineering and a realization that better locomotion is the ultimate purpose of automobiles, or sufficient intelligence to turn that portion of his manufacturing over to men with the competence required to do the job well.

Do the careless purveyors of geegaws, knickknacks and thingamajigs know what final use will be demanded of their questionable products? Obviously not! If they did, they would never have dreamed them up in the first place.

Apart from usefulness, the ultimate purpose of all home furnishings is to give visual pleasure. Since the manufacturer and the buyer alike are rarely guilty of even an informal art knowledge and frequently unburdened by the simple requisites of good taste, they shy away from original thought or any genuinely creative work. Hence, their long-standing habit of sending in repeat orders for "good sellers." The reason for many items becoming good sellers or a "hot line" is because the harried salespeople must press these distortions on the public or lose their jobs. Woe unto the salesclerk who criticizes the buyer, for he is monarch of all he purveys!

Let us consider this august personage, the buyer.

Usually he's chosen for seniority or "knowledge of the merchandise." Since seniority is usually synonymous with advanced years, the merchandise he knows so well is the same sad stuff they've been in the habit of selling for lo! these many, many seasons. Sometimes a buyer is selected on the basis of being a friend of the boss or "well liked in the trade." The latter attribute generally consists of being able to polish off a quart of 100-proof ego-builder without involuntarily assuming a horizontal position, and being able to recall without previous notice the current smoking car anecdotes.

What are the results of these malpractices?

Let us examine them in every field in which they can be found.

First, the "crimes":

In china—

The china manufacturers seem to have been influenced by Gertrude Stein's "A rose is a rose is a rose . . ." which they've amended to read, "A decoration is a rose is a rose . . ." Unfortunately, anything repeated loud enough and often enough makes a permanent impression on the public. One manufacturer boasts that a rose that was designed for him 35 years ago is still selling well! In what other field can you find such smug, complacent lack of progress? Perhaps Freud could diagnose this rose fixation.

Our rigid china decoration must either follow the border of a plate or have the design spotted in the center. Far worse, however, are the designs themselves, which are usually slight variations on patterns established 40 to 60 years ago. Obviously the trade feels the more decoration, the more beautiful the china. They say it looks "rich." A more apt description would be "newly rich"!

It is a serious charge against the china industry that, despite splendid know-how in manufacturing and resultant quality of product, American chinaware has been ruined by the habit of tasteless decor.

In LAMPS—

The purpose of a lamp is to give light and in appearance to attain a feeling of unity of light, base and shade. But alas, too many lamps hide their light under bushels of horses' heads, ballet dancers, Pekinese, aborigines, Chinese spitoons, giraffes, carafes, nudes, lumps of flowers or vegetation; in fact, anything to which the benefits of science enable us to attach a light!

In FURNITURE—

"Time-tested" designs are a meaningless explanation for a great many furniture manufacturing styles. Naturally, it is easier to steal from the past than to originate in the present. Thus in the 20th Century we continue to manufacture furniture with designs evolved from the limited methods and materials of the 18th Century. Ancient patterns in furniture are as ridiculous as ancient patterns in dress. Nor are the average manufacturer's conceptions of "moderne" furniture any better — too often they are simply meaningless designs with no sound architectural basis of construction and completely haphazard application of materials.

In FABRICS—

In the medium price field, the great percentage of the upholstery and drapery fabrics littering the shelves of stores from Coast to Coast, show such lack of thought that it's impossible to discover what approach was used in designing them. It probably was "Give the public this and see if it sells . . ."

Perhaps the worst eyesores are the mohairs, rayons and velours. It is wellnigh impossible to find an upholstered suite that is not further tortured by a covering of heavily patterned velour or an equally abominable brocade. Referred to as "classy" by the trade, the "class" could be aptly described if permissible in print!

Occasionally a drapery manufacturer uses rare ingenuity. Finding that red is a good seller in a competitive line, he brings out red, too. What matter that there are a hundred shades of this primary color? To him. a red is a red is a red . . . These masters of bad taste have succeeded in building a demand for pastels— those pallid shades that are the gray ghosts of colors with real life. Too often a customer chooses a pastel shade — frequently the only choice he has —and finds that only other dead colors combine with it. The result — a home lacking in colorful vitality.

Of course, we find the rose complex in fabric design, too. The usual drapery patterns are so mixed and busy that it is impossible to use them and complete a room in good taste. Surely if the makers had pictured these fabrics in an otherwise tastefully appointed interior, they would never have produced them. For years, monks-cloth and theatrical gauze have sold well and faithfully. Why? The answer is simple; they were honest fabrics, lacking in pretense.

In GLASSWARE—

In both stemware and decorative glass, the beauty of the basic material usually has been destroyed by decoration and embellishment. Here we may blame the machine age for the hideous examples seen on store shelves. For simple, direct use of a material, the beautiful examples turned out by the Colonial and early Waterford factories have never been surpassed. With this splendid heritage to guide us, it is surely time that more American manufacturers attained this same sincere approach toward unembellished basic form.

In GIFTWARES—

Our last group indictment includes what are known to the trade as "decorative" objects or giftwares. According to Webster, to be decorative an object should adorn or beautify. How do the unhappy objects palmed off on the buyers sonambulating through our merchandise marts, contribute beauty? Here we find not only the flower complex, but the animal complex as well. We all love animals and are easily persuaded that a Scottie leaning against a pile of books is a handsome bookend —because we associate it with the original. We mistake a sentimental attachment for decorative art.

It is not surprising that a tremendous percentage of the American population dreads the coming of the Christmas season and the attendant struggle to find a few gifts that will be possible to present with a feeling of good-will toward men. The suffering clerks of the Return Desk would not be on the verge of nervous breakdowns if giftware makers applied some serious thought to the ultimate use and artistic worth of their products.

Accusation is never a popular device, nor is the accuser always well-liked and admired for his pains. In this instance, however, the facts speak for themselves and all that a large industrywide indictment can hope to accomplish is to bring home to the errant defendants a simple, honest, self-appraisal. Nineteen forty six will force the issue quickly. Vacuum cleaners, automobiles, radios, electrical appliances will perforce be Mr. and Mrs. America's prime consideration. Soon the perpetrators of triteness and ugliness for the home will find that their competition in other trades is no longer hamstrung by shortages and war work.

Nineteen forty six will be the biggest year the manufacturers of hard goods have ever had. In the household appliance field alone, the demand will be phenomenal. The manufacturers of these appliances are prepared to supply the market with well-contrived, practical devices that are as good-looking as they are useful.

The consumer will find that the chromium-plated coffee-maker he buys to use in harmony with his modern range and refrigerator, is more satisfying both for utility and appearance than the elaborate tea set he has been using in his "period" dining room. He will quickly come to the realization that the style and design of most of the things he has been living with for so many years are completely phoney — because they are out of step with the life of today. This doesn't mean that he will demand an equally false modern design, but rather, household furnishings and decorative objects that combine 20th Century livability with beauty expressly styled for today's requirements.

What is the solution?

In the United States, today, there are countless competent designers, experienced in almost every field, who should be utilized to style products that are well executed, and honest in both utility and artistry — products that will demonstrate the manufacturer's understanding of the ultimate use and place in today's homes of the things he makes; in short, functional designers.

This is not merely theorizing. Already, well-executed contemporary designs in china, glass, giftwares, lamps, silver, rugs and furniture are on the market and quickly outselling the articles made by the outdated, hit-or-miss method. The manufacturers of these practical expressions of modern taste are to be complimented on their ability to spurn the hindsight of their more numerous competitors, in favor of the foresight to hire an expert to handle the side of the business they themselves don't understand; not an "expert" who started designing for the trade 30 or 40 years ago and still faithfully executes his first successes — but rather, one who is in step both in years and ideas with our times.

Throughout the country, a great majority of the blueprints on the architect's drafting tables are of contemporary houses. These smart, practical, comfortable houses, eminently livable, which will be built by the hundreds of thousands in 1946 and the years following, are not designed to accommodate anything but honest furniture and accessories of contemporary design.

Forward-looking manufacturers are already preparing to meet these architects and their up-to-date ideas half way. Yes, our subject has its brighter side!

Not long ago a china factory was persuaded to sell a line of fine coup-shaped ware with no decoration. Its intrinsic beauty lay in its shape and structure and its perfect adaptability to modern interiors. It became an immediate success. The same china, patterned and embellished, would lose its most important qualities.

In cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art, which will exhibit the best results, a fabric manufacturer is sponsoring a competition among designers for his products. Not only will he secure outstanding fabrics for his looms, but in addition, the attendant publicity of the museum's show will stimulate a national interest in his products.

A justly famed American glass factory has a complete, long-range program that could well serve as a model for other manufacturers. It employs a staff of artists whose sketches and models are studied and improved for a year or more until perfection is approached. Further this firm sees that the retail stores that carry its line present it properly, even going so far as to have its own architect plan the room in which this fine glass will show to its deserved advantage. Then to carry through completely, the store must send a chosen salesperson to the manufacturer's showroom to learn how best to present the product to the public. Needless to say, this intelligent approach pays dividends both in prestige and sales.

Unless the unprogressive manufacturers of giftwares and accessories get "off the dime," they won't be worth a nickel a year from now. There is almost nothing in this field to serve suitably as accessories for well-done contemporary homes. Must these homes be barren of the objects that by adding warmth and color warmth and color to a house, individualized it? They must, unfortunately, rather than risk ruining an interior. This field, perhaps, offers the greatest challenge to the progressive manufacturer. There are many fine craftsmen and artists who can create truly decorative objects that will make the American home uniquely beautiful. It is not up to the manufacturer himself to add his 2 cents' worth to the artists' design. He admits, in hiring the artist, that he himself is not artistically equipped. If the artist cannot meet the demands of the manufacturer, let him find one who can. Nothing is more unsuccessful than too many fingers in the artistic pie.

Many lamps on today's market are created by the same top industrial designers who plan smart kitchenware and household appliances which for durability and appearance can't be beaten anywhere in the world. These lamps are not expensive and are so popular that it is almost impossible to meet the demand.

A large silver manufacturer is unfortunately producing elaborate patterns in preference to the simpler, more adaptable flatware also produced by his house —an unhappy move now, when the demand for the unaffected in silver is the greatest in its history. In hollow-ware as well, if the factories don't take a realistic look at the world about them, quickly, Mr. and Mrs. America will buy instead, the handsome utensils made of baser metals, so superior in design to nearly everything manufactured in precious metals.

Some rug manufacturers are intelligently adapting their products to potential surroundings. Simplicity is the keynote, and they make unpretentious and appropriate use of new materials. Soon, nearly all the traditional rug designs will be automatically discarded. They have rarely complimented any type of room and are altogether out of keeping with the current trend of interiors.

In rugs, fortunately, the public has the alternate choice of solid color broadloom and carpeting, but should have many more happy combinations in this type of covering with interest supplied through weave and texture rather than through variety of color and design.

There is some fine furniture in all price ranges being designed and manufactured today; but not nearly enough to supply even a small portion of the present demand. Here again, manufacturers who have hired artistic "know-how" as a car manufacturer hires engineering "know-how," are responsible for the good examples. They have the ability to picture the ultimate setting in which their creation will be placed. They have learned that it isn't enough for a chair to leave the showroom accompanied by music from the cash register — it must fit harmoniously with its new environment. These manufacturers see the future trend clearly and have set a pace that will soon force their competitors to follow or get out of the race!

We all know that it will be a long time, if ever, before any country can compete successfully with American manufacturing methods. Our houses, furnishings, art objects, the very clothes on our backs, however, have always been influenced and adapted from European design. Since the war we have been cut off from this influence. For instance, during these war years American manufacturers have established themselves as world leaders in women's clothing styles. From now on, the preeminent creative designs in women's wear will be American-inspired as well as American-made. It is up to the manufacturers of home furnishings and accessories to revolt just as effectively against foreign influence. If we raise our own artistic standards, we won't have to raise tariff walls to protect ourselves against the certain competition from the European market.

It is high time that the label "Made in America" stood for more than manufacturing speed and efficiency. It should stand as well for artistic integrity. This demands that each of us, the manufacturers and the buyers, start the ball rolling in our own field.

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Gump's: one of a kind

Famous old San Francisco store keeps its special emphasis on good design even while it reaches out for a less wealthy clientele

The two-column ad in the New Yorker magazine was a calculated bit of mercantile snobbery. It showed a moody store front with the name Gump's, and below it the words, "leave New York at noon . . . shop here at 3 p.m." That was all.

To Gump's customers, and to a widening circle of shoppers, browsers, and just plain visitors, it was enough. After 102 years, 54 of them at the same stand, Gump's is synonymous with San Francisco. Its glittering array of jades, antiques, home accents, contemporary art, and gift wares rivals Fisherman's Wharf, the Top of the Mark, and the Golden Gate Bridge as a tourist attraction.

The venerable landmark in the fashionable shopping block of Post St. was also an irresistible lure to such New York retailers as Abercrombie & Fitch, Brooks Bros., Dunhill, Sulka, and Tiffany when they looked for branch sites—they settled down as neighbors.

Variety range. Gump's far-ranging popularity is out of proportion to its size—a little over $4-million annual volume. Once the private preserve of the wealthy, the store now shares its treasures as readily with the $3.75 shopper as with the $10,000 plunger. It's the only place in San Francisco where you can buy a $3,600 specimen of Steuben glass and a $5 tea set of imported Japanese terra cotta.

Gump's attractions are its unique variety of selections and its solemn dedication to the proposition that "good taste costs no more," a slogan that is memorialized in the title of a brisk-selling book (Doubleday, 1951, $5) from the pen of Pres. Richard B. Gump (cover), grandson of the founder.

When controller Per Nevard closes the books next week on the Christmas shopping season, they'll show 31% of the store's 1963 volume. With June (brides) and August (tourists), Christmas accounts for

Pres. Gump (left) poses with Buddha —only item in Gump's not for sale.

half the year's business. Gift purchases account for half of Gump's unit volume, 40% of dollar sales.

Off-beat start. Richard Gump, 57, owns 40% of the family corporation and is a trustee for the other 60%, a comfortable position for an executive with stubborn instincts for swimming against the retail stream. He is a man of many faces—merchant, artist, author, musician, composer, designer, lecturer, photographer, bon vivant. He studied boxing at the age of five, and despite a boyhood hunting accident that frustrated his athletic ambitions can still deck a belligerent brawler.

His father, the late A. Livingston Gump, saw little promise of a merchandising career in his son's future. "You're too artistic, too impractical, to be a businessman," he said sadly.

Wrong prediction. By accepted retailing standards, the father was right, and the economic outlook for Gump's wasn't too bright when Dick took over as president in 1947 on his father's death. Seven years of knocking about in Hollywood as a draftsman, set designer, actor's agent, and musical composer for the films had shattered some of his illusions about the Bohemian life. "I lived the life of wondering where to get ten bucks," he says.

But he still was no businessman. Heads wagged at the thought that the legendary Gump's was now in the faltering hands of a serious artist-musician who got his leisure kicks out of leading and playing the clarinet in a thing called Guckenheimer's Sour Kraut Band.

The worries were unnecessary. Gump more than doubled the store's sales volume, and his roughly 3% net profit after taxes is well ahead of the 1.73% average for stores in the $2-million to $5-million bracket.

I. Unorthodox tactics

How did this maverick of retailing manage to widen the store's appeal without damage to its carriage trade popularity?

He backed up a personal conviction that customers of whatever economic status welcome informed guidance in the selection of merchandise, and that they're weary of the pomposity of self-anointed arbiters of style. Through some 300 lectures around the U. S. and through his books—two profitable sidelines—he got it across that price is a poor index to good design.

Gump's does not press for growth. "Instead of pressuring his executives for a 5% sales increase, the guy in charge should find out what's wrong with his merchandising policies,"

Gift department caters to the $3.75 shopper as well as to the $10,000 plunger. Whatever the price tag, Gump's insists the item be of good design.

Lotus Room with its heavy Oriental flavor features authentic antiques—tansu, garden sculptures, paintings, scrolls—also has some reproductions.

Tableware includes 237 patterns of fine china, 125 crystal patterns, and more than 82 silver flatware patterns—all available in Gump's stock.

says Gump. The right merchandising policies will then naturally produce growth, he thinks. But the stress is on quality.

Design test. In 1952 he devised a design test. Every applicant for a sales job must pass it with a score of 66% or better, and every office and service employee must take it whether he passes or not.

The job applicant is shown a looseleaf book of 137 illustrations—classic furniture, room arrangements, dinner table settings, sculptures, vases, candelabra, silver flatware, crystal stemware—and is required to rate each item good or bad design. He must get 91 "right" to be considered for a job. Test results are known only by the president and the personnel manager.

Experts all. The test serves multiple purposes. By preselecting sales people of lofty taste standards, it gives the store a tone befitting its assumptions of omniscience. It keeps the 170 employees on notice that Gump sees merchandising as something more than separating a customer from his money. And it gives the president the comfortable assurance that customers' ears won't be assailed by the verbal posturings of glib but uninformed salesmen.

"The successful merchandiser," says Gump, "is the one who appreciates the ultimate use of the product, who looks critically at the product through the customer's eyes. Too many merchants are just buying and trading dollars. We buy merchandise. Our stock in trade is creating merchandise.

"People expect us to have things they can't find anywhere else, and it's our job to accommodate them. We stay out of the competitive rat race."

On the shelves. That's not strictly true. In china, glass stemware, and flat silver, Gump's is not only in the rat race but tries hard to lead it. Open shelves running the depth of the store display a variety that would be unusual for any store. There are place settings of 237 patterns of the most celebrated dinner china; 125 patterns of crystal; and in sterling flatware 72 patterns of all the members of the Silversmiths Guild plus those of the most famous foreign designers.

Close to $400,000 is tied up in china and crystal inventory. "We're not order takers," says veteran buyer Robert J. Sheldon. "When a customer buys a couple of place settings, or a dozen, she wants them now, off the shelf, not a couple of weeks from now. We take pride in being able to accommodate her."

You can also spot a few other competitive items. One telltale sign is the price tag. If it says $7.95 or $29.95, you can be pretty sure it's available elsewhere at the same price; if the tag reads $7.50, or $30, or any even amount, the chances are it's a Gump's exclusive.

"Good" or "bad" design test is given to all sales job applicants.

Price-tag phobia. Artificially shaded prices are anathema to Richard Gump. He forbids them except on competitive merchandise. And he takes a cold view of practices that emphasize price attraction.

A few days ago he paused at a cabinet of silver antiques, next to jade his most cherished collection. They were priced to $1,000 and higher. Inside he spotted a card reading "Reasonably priced."

"Let's get rid of that sign," he told a salesman. "It's schlocky. Anybody who doesn't know that the prices are reasonable doesn't deserve to own these lovely pieces. Any number of wholesalers in England would love to buy them at our price."

Lint-picker. Gump is no button-punching executive in the classic tradition. He roams the three floors of the store with the pained expression of one sensing imminent disaster. Not much escapes his notice. The emotional energy that another merchant would put into pressuring his people for bigger sales goes into lint-picking at Gump's.

II. Shopping for Gump's

The store's unorthodox approach to merchandising is typified in its lamp department, which sold some 5,000 floor and table lamps last year. All but about 5% of them were custom-styled and built by Gump's.

Head of the department is Gerry Dewey, 42, a Nebraskan with academic background in fine arts and design, including a spell at the Sorbonne. Gump's had no opening for him when he applied for a job in 1953, but his still undisclosed score in the design test caught the president's eye and Dewey was hired as an extra lamp salesman.

Though he is department buyer, Dewey buys few lamps. He pokes around distant lands for materials that can be converted into bases and for lampshade fabrics. Three years ago the store sent him to the Orient on a buying expedition. Last year he went around the world.

In 1953, Pres. Gump found some ceremonial horns in Nepal that made excellent bases. They were so well received by customers that Dewey is still buying them. Good taste as delineated in Dewey's custom designs costs between $22.50 and $1,000, including shades. All these lamps are Gump exclusives.

Criteria. In lamps, as in exotic jade sculptures and jewelry, Oriental antiques, fashion apparel, and gift wares, the first test that Gump's applies is whether they are good design, and, for their intended use, whether they are functional.

If a product clears both hurdles and seems compatible with the store's merchandise mix, the next question is whether it will sell. On a buying trip to Europe in 1928, Gump bought 250 sets of an item he found in a Carlsbad factory, and it went over with a thud. He didn't forget it. Now he buys a dozen or so and reorders if they're popular.

Exclusive. If a manufacturer's output is small, Gump's may take it all. Or the store may ask the manufacturer to modify the design exclusively for Gump's.

Alfredo Soriano, buyer of gift wares and bar accessories, made three pilgrimages in successive years to a factory in a remote European city before he could persuade the owner to make a gift item exclusively for Gump's.

Soriano, who rarely visits the periodic U. S. market showings of gift ware manufacturers, also keeps his transom open. A couple of years ago, a southern California rancher with a hand for ceramics brought a suitcase of his bowls, ash trays, and vases to Soriano's desk. The gift buyer liked them well enough to give them a test run on the selling floor. The store sold $20,000 worth in one year.

Hot items. Soriano's eye for the unusual has helped to make thriving businesses of other "cottage" indus-

tries. A hot item right now is a line of mobiles, made of colored transparent discs, that ranges in price from $5 to $15. A San Francisco businessman brought some in last spring as examples of his wife's hobby. Even before the Christmas shopping season began, Gump's sold 2,500.

"Find out what the public wants," says Gump, "and if it's in good taste push it for all you're worth."

For a store whose price tags run up to $13,200 for a pair of carved jade urns, Gump's has sold astonishing numbers of far less expensive specialties. A line of plastic trivets at $7 to $15 found 4,000 purchasers in seven months this year. Soriano found a covered glass candy jar in Portugal, sold 10,000 in eight years at $6.50. A line of enameled copper plates at $7.50 to $32.50 has sold by the thousands each year for 10 years.

One stand. "We have no plans for branches," says Gump, who closed out stores in Carmel, Calif., and Honolulu to settle his father's estate. "At best, a branch would be a limited Gump's. It's hard enough to find all the things we want for one store, especially antiques. That's why we had to send four buyers around the world this year."

Cash and credit. About one-third of purchases at Gump's are for cash. The rest is divided among 75,000 open-account credit customers, of whom three-fourths are in northern California, a tiny fraction in the Los Angeles area, and about 20% in other states. New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois are "heavy duty" markets for Gump's, according to credit manager William Bradley. The store has no budget plan credit except for china, glass, and silver, conforming to retail trade custom in those areas. Credit losses on open accounts are trifling—less than one-quarter of 1%.

Ad budget. Gump's is not a big advertiser. Before Christmas and again in June, it runs modest ads in the San Francisco papers and in the New Yorker magazine. The store took some space in this year's pre-Christmas issue of Holiday, and last year ran some copy in the western edition of the New York Times and in Realites. It also sponsors a weekly radio broadcast of opera.

The total advertising budget runs about 2.5% of sales, and a good half of that is devoted to a catalogue, issued annually just before Christmas. Although the store doesn't promote mail-order business, the catalogue generates a good deal of it. Among the 75,000 credit customers it commands a readership that would make Sears, Roebuck envious.

buy words

To be an arbiter of taste in an age of mass production and conformity is a task to daunt any man: yet Richard Gump, who first took over full management of his family store on Post Street in 1947, has not only achieved this enviable position, but continues to crusade for better taste in American homes with wit and enthusiasm.

In the pursuit of his ideals Mr. Gump had the example first of his grandfather, Solomon Gump, who founded the store in 1861, and secondly of his father, A. Livingston Gump, who greatly enlarged the firm's interests after the great fire of 1906.

Mr. A. L. Gump, although nearly blind for the greater part of his life, developed an extraordinary tactile sensitivity, which enabled him to become a leading authority on jade. It was he who first imported oriental works of art to make Gump's known far and wide for its unique blend of the familiar and the recondite, in a highly successful marriage of East and West.

It was a boyhood hunting accident that first gave Richard Gump the leisure and opportunity to explore the fine arts. Denied his dream of becoming a major-league baseball player, Mr. Gump turned to architecture, design, music composition and the practice of several musical instruments.

After further studies at Stanford University, Mr. Gump joined the firm. In 1947, when he took over full management, Mr. Gump had his first opportunity of imposing, as his father and grandfather had done, his own views and personality on the family business.

Richard Gump made clear, in a number of whimsical and provocative books, that all the conventional standards of taste were not for him, and not for his store either.

In "Good Taste Costs No More," Mr. Gump juxtaposes two typical American women. The one thinks herself a woman of taste because she chooses everything to match, following the latest fashion in the glossier magazines.

The other, less sure of herself, feels her way among objects which represent her own way of living, mixing periods and styles. Mr. Gump leaves one in no doubt that he considers the second woman the more discriminating.

As a discriminating and sophisticated person himself, Mr. Gump believes in looking at things with an innocent eye. Antiques are not necessarily good because they are old. "It is better," he says, "to own a nobly conceived modern sculpture, at a tenth the price, than an ill conceived T'ang piece."

Many fads and fashions have been the target of Richard Gump's sharp pen. "Families shouldn't save their best things for strangers and guests," he declares. "Aren't they good enough to use them for themselves?"

In this fashion, Mr. Gump demolishes the myth of formal entertaining, which he regards as an inconvenient and pretentious survival if it doesn't come off naturally.

Other butts for Richard Gump's wit are the "Let George Do It" school of design (George I, II, III and IV, that is), which has produced over the years those perversions of the styles of Georgian England forever associated with Grand Rapids.

The remarkable thing about this idealistic crusader for good taste is that his crusade has been successful: successful not only in persuading the public that it is better to buy the best, but that it is often the best buy.

This philosophy is put into practice at Gump's at every turn. An expensive object of great beauty may find itself alongside a relatively inexpensive piece of merchandise which has justified its place there by being well designed.

The fastidious taste of the owner makes itself apparent in every aspect of the store. The window displays are always unexpected and imaginative, and although only three stories house sixteen different departments, there is an air of spaciousness throughout.

Among Mr. Gump's many-sided interests has been the founding of the Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band, of which he is the unconventional *Kappelmeister*. Interestingly enough, Richard Gump is also a serious musician, with a number of symphonic, chamber and choral works to his credit.

Of the seriousness of his aims to spread art appreciation over a wide

Mr. Richard Gump stands beside the colossal 18th century Tibetan statue of Buddha, which gazes down on Gump's Oriental department.

public there can be no doubt. Mr. Gump lives by his own creed.

His own office, the Sanctum Sanctorum, as it were, of the organization, he laughingly dismisses as "Primitive Charles II." It is, in fact, a tactfully decorated room, in which old and new blend together.

No imposing office furniture to intimidate staff or client dominates the room. Instead, a simple Seventeenth Century table does service for luncheon and as desk.

In a nearby corner cupboard is a neat row of notebooks. Here are the fruits of Mr. Gump's world wide travels. As he reflectively turns a page one catches a glimpse of a delicate little sketch of a French commode or a Georgian convex mirror, with a neatly written comment alongside.

From this highly personal record come the exquisitely chosen objects that are found on the display counters and shelves of the store. Everything is judged on its own merit. There is no question of seeking a status symbol here.

And yet, paradoxically enough, that is what Gump's itself has become. A gift-wrapped present from Gump's is a status symbol for all that is elegant, choice, and civilized. That is the final irony, which no one would appreciate better than Richard Gump himself.

The Antiques Dealer, July, 1965.

Regular readers are familiar with Irene Hammond Corpe's columns, San Francisco Showcase *and* Bay Area Showcase. *Among the many fine retail establishments she has written about is the fabulous* Gump's *of San Francisco.*

She wrote: "One of the most exciting places to visit in San Francisco is Gump's *on Post Street. (Their) buyers travel throughout the world for the best in antiques, and the store's annual catalog is a lesson in fine art."*

Richard Gump, third generation owner of the firm, is a rare combination of astute businessman, cogent author and antiques expert - particularly with regard to jade and Oriental art. Here, for the benefit of other dealers, are some of the observations about the antiques trade from one of the world's most successful merchandisers of antiques. - Ed.

Richard Gump Speaks Out

On Buying and Selling Antiques, Good Display, Today's Dealers, Good Design and "Monstrosities"

BY IRENE HAMMOND CORPE

■ RICHARD GUMP, president of *Gump's* in San Francisco, has long believed that good taste not only does not cost extra but knows no season. He's always been appalled at some of the "monstrosities" that are sold under the loose designation "antique" - a label that all too many people erroneously believe to be synonymous with good taste.

Because of his extensive experiences in the antiques field, and because he has many practical ideas to share with dealers, THE ANTIQUES DEALER recently asked Mr. Gump to outline some of his views and experiences, and to permit us to explain his famous "Design Test" as a guide to dealers who might wish to follow suit.

Although Mr. Gump is full of enthusiasm for buying and selling antiques, he has some definite reservations about the trade as it is being conducted today. He feels, for example, that too many dealers are too new to the field.

"Unless a dealer has a lifetime of handling antiques," he explained, "he can often, through innocence, be duped when buying in Europe or in the Orient, and in turn innocently dupe his customers. It is the public, trusting the dealer as an expert, who has often been fooled by the poorly informed dealer, turning them away from making future purchases of antiques. If dealers are not well informed, they should seek training and study. In fact, dealing in antiques should constitute a lifetime of study about antiques."

Views on some of today's dealers

"Another type of dealer who does little for the trade is the one who rationalizes the authenticity of his antiques. These are the dealers who sell stories rather than the antiques themselves." In this category Mr. Gump places those dealers who would sell a bed on the basis that some obscure

continued

royal personage had slept in it rather than selling the bed on its inherent merits, underscoring its fine design, construction and color. If the piece in question is not a good example of its period, and its design is not so fine and its construction is unusually poor, Mr. Gump is quick to remind dealers, all the stories and rationalization in the world will not transform it into a masterpiece.

Mr. Gump reports that he has frequently been taken back by dealers' lack of appreciation of good patina. He realizes that it's increasingly difficult to obtain antiques in good shape, and that repair work and restoration are often essential before some pieces can be put on the sales floor. Nonetheless, he urges dealers to be more cautious, and evaluate their pieces more carefully before destroying old finishes under the guise of removing accumulated dirt. If the dealer is not sure about a particular finish, he should be willing to admit it to himself, and employ a competent workman who does recognize the important differences. Some of the most beautiful tables, Mr. Gump points out, are those which have stood in a front room window for years, mellowing the wood to a degree impossible to duplicate. Yet a foolish dealer can destroy the lovely patina through simple ignorance and a desire to get rid of the dirt!

Mr. Gump cited numerous examples of fine pieces whose value had been drastically reduced due to refinishing in order to make them look "like new."

His reputation precedes him

The brief discussion of value suddenly brought out Mr. Gump's views on the necessity of buying at the right price. "Fortunately, *Gump's* can be choosy in picking items," he commented. "If something is over priced we simply don't buy it. We work closely with selected dealers, and we do *not* bargain. If the price is right, we buy. But we refuse to haggle. If a dealer quotes us a price on a piece, and we have recently purchased a similar piece for less, we let him know it. If he comes down to our price that's fine. If he doesn't, we don't bargain."

Mr. Gump confides that his reputation for refusing to bargain has often preceded him, which saves him trips to dealers who consistently over-price. On the other hand, it is not unusual for him to virtually clear out a dealer's entire stock when good pieces at fair prices are for sale.

Mr. Gump could not resist recounting an experience or two which fit into the files of dealers' "classic" experiences - like the fellow who asks him to bid on, or buy a particular piece which belonged to his "great-great-grandfather" and has been in his family "for ages." He cited an instance in which a museum director was invited to an ancestral home in Scotland to possibly purchase a painting by a 17th century artist. The painting, naturally, depicted an ancestor of the owner. Allowed to have a moment alone with the handsome painting, the museum director scrutinized the canvas texture and the paint and determined that it had been painted about 1900. Naturally, he refused to buy it and angered the owner with his candid appraisal that the painting was too modern to be included in his museum's collection of work by the supposed artist. The owner's anger gave way to curiosity, however, and after some investigation she wrote to the museum director to apologize for her anger. It seems that the original painting had been copied for her grandfather and the original was sold. The duplication was never discovered until she tried to raise some money with it.

It's on the basis of just such experiences that Mr. Gump feels that a dealer must be well informed to be successful, and that buying pieces solely for their "stories," or because the dealer "thinks" the pieces are authentic, adds up to bad business practice in the long run because such practices can only hurt customers.

As for "monstrosities," Mr. Gump acknowledges the fact that very often in order to obtain some excellent pieces from an estate a dealer has to accept some rather horrible pieces. His advice is straight forward: "Don't sell these bad pieces as antiques and don't sell them as inherently valuable pieces. Sell them as curiosities - perhaps in some cases for their amusement value. *Isn't this an amusing document of the 1890 period?* Or, don't add them to your own stock at all. Persuade a neighboring second-hand dealer to take them. He'll sell them for what ever the traffic will bear. Or put the stuff out at auction with other pieces of little worth."

Mr. Gump and his buyers keep meticulous records of all purchases which provide a ready reference to comparative costs and other pertinent information. Mr. Gump utilizes a separate loose leaf notebook for each of his buying trips. He sketches each purchase in detail, records sizes and dimensions and makes notes of particular variations in hardware, etc. He records the cost, and when possible, photographs each piece with his Polaroid camera, pasting the print on the same page as his sketch. When the purchase is made an order number is assigned to it and noted on the proper page of the notebook. Among other things, the system provides an excellent check on items as they arrive from Europe or the Orient.

If he is in search of particular pieces for special customers, he includes the special information in his notebook before departing. In addition to his notebook, Mr. Gump says that he always carries a book of English hallmarks with him on his buying trips.

Views on effective display

On the subject of proper display, our own observation is that *Gump's* strongly believes in displaying each individual piece in such a fashion that it can be fully appreciated by itself. It may be grouped with similar pieces as part of a room setting or displayed in a glass case, but nothing is permitted to distract from the individual beauty of each individual piece. Oriental antiques are a specialty of the house and they are displayed on the second floor of the store, while home accessories, lighting fixtures and lamps, silver and glass are displayed on the main floor. There is no jumble or clutter in any part of the store. This is particularly true of the displays of antiques. There is sufficient space maintained around and between the various items to permit stepping back to get a good perspective on almost any individual item.

Mr. Gump is definitely not an advocate of a so-called "jumble display," where antiquers can theoretically browse in the hope of discovering a "treasure." (Are we to really believe that the "treasure" is priced that low because the dealer just stuck it in the pile - totally unaware of its great

value?) This is not the display method for *Gump's!*

"But I know that it works in some places," says Mr. Gump. "I know of a dealer in Florence whose place is absolutely messy. His customers come in droves to search out items that they are sure are 'finds.' Unfortunately, this particular dealer is not above mixing reproductions among his true antiques, and never commits himself when a customer 'discovers' something in his shop. In fact, he has been including certain reproductions that sell well year after year, and they are purchased simply because they *look* old to the customer - not because he *says* they are antique." Mr. Gump urges caution with regard to jumble displays. He reports that they can work in reverse - keeping customers, and particularly connoisseurs, out of the shop.

The man, the store and the famous "Test"

Richard B. Gump is the third generation to head the firm, which was founded in 1861 by his grandfather, Solomon Gump. The store originally sold mirrors, frames and gilded cornices, and later added European paintings and objects of art. Mr. A. Livingston Gump, Richard Gump's father, introduced Oriental art to San Francisco. His specialty was jade and he put *Gump's* in the forefront as first-rate specialists in fine jade and Oriental art. *Gump's* survived the fire and earthquake of 1906, and went on to add many other departments, and to increase the size and scope of their Oriental antiques and jade collections.

Richard Gump is a noted lecturer and the author of two books: *Good Taste Costs No More,* and *Jade: Stone of Heaven.* He is a painter of note and an accomplished musician. Finally, and of considerable interest, he developed the *Gump Design Test* for use in his firm.

The test was developed for use by Mr. Gump in his particular endeavors, and copies are not available to the public. However, he has generously permitted us to outline its development and use in order that others may adapt the basic idea of the test to their own needs if they wish.

The completed *Gump Design Test* consists of 137 illustrations, bound together in a loose leaf binder, complete with illustrations that are protected by clear, plastic covers. The illustrations include furniture, antiques, lamps, vases, Oriental sculpture, and many other items. The applicant marks a separate sheet of paper with his verdict on each item: good or bad design. Mr. Gump acknowledges that the test judges opinion, and that the results are strictly subjective. The results, however, clearly indicate that the subject has or has not some concept of good taste and good design.

Experience with the test, which has been used by the store for some years, indicates that it has been very valuable in maintaining a scale of taste for an entire retail organization as well as for employment applicants.

Just as Mr. Gump points out - that good taste knows no season and costs no more - beautiful antiques will be just as desireable and handsome tomorrow as they are today.

And those are some of the observations of a man who is both a connoisseur and a master merchandiser.

Joyce Jansen
PUBLIC RELATIONS

(415) 921-1266

2241 JACKSON STREET · SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94115

April 10, 1983

Mr. Richard Gump
GUMP'S
250 Post Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94108

Dear Mr. Gump:

When then mayor Roger D. Lapham wanted to dump our cable car system in 1947, you joined Mrs. Friedel Klussmann in her historic battle to save them.

Recently, I signed a contract with Mrs. Klussmann to help her with her story which she began writing in 1957 which concerns the saving. She showed me the box of letters your fine organization gathered after the ad in TIME magazine prompted them and I became fascinated. We have a letter of intent from Presidio Press to publish this book which will also include Andrew Hallidie's part in San Francisco's history as well as the present story of the rehabilitation with photographs of the city as it looks today--torn up.

We are wondering if you would care to add a few comments about how you felt receiving such overwhelming response at that time. In reading many of these letters (some will be included in this book) it proves that interest in our little cars seems to be world-wide. Time is of the essence as our deadline is next month in order to have the date of publication coincide with the date the cars are contractually due to return--June 1, 1984.

Look forward to receiving your thoughts on paper.

Cordially,

Joyce Jansen

Joyce Jansen

cc: Mr. William Goulet
(vice-president, Gump's)

APR 13 1983
GUMPS OFFICE

Richard B. Gump
1895 Franklin Street
San Francisco, California 94109

10 May 1983

Miss Joyce Jansen
2241 Jackson Street
San Francisco, California 94115

Dear Miss Jansen:

The response to GUMP'S ads in TIME Magazine in 1947 surprised me and confirmed that people throughout the Country were as enthusiastic about cable cars as I always had been.

My enthusiasm goes back to when San Francisco had the two-car cable conveyance on Pacific Avenue where we boys at Potter School used to rock it off the track after we had left our studies and organized athletics.

Cable cars always bring fond memories. With the 1983-84 reconstruction, instead of living in the past, our many visitors and I may soon look forward to a bright nostalgic future.

Sincerely,

Richard B. Gump

It's this way... only San Francisco has cable cars

Cable cars—if you've never seen them—are gay, light-hearted little contraptions with tinkling bells that play sprightly tunes all up and down the San Francisco hills. They have a gentle Victorian air that reminds almost everyone of those innocent days when atomic meant something small.

Even their best friends admit that the cable cars are about the world's most eccentric form of transportation. Cable car riders cheerfully take the same chances that the end man on the Olympic Bob sled Team does, but instead of an award, they just catch hell for being late to the office.

In any other city, cable cars would be retired to a pleasant pasture. People could visit them on sunny days and feed them old felt hats that were ruined when they blew off cable car riders' heads.

But in sentimental San Francisco, brother has turned against brother, father against son, and of course, wife against husband in grim battle.

Down at Powell and Market where the cash customers happily help push the cars on their turntable—there's the same feeling in the air that pervaded the field of Shiloh the day before battle was joined...

Out at the perilous corner of Jackson and Powell, a doughty conductor sets his little cap straight, waves to admirers on the sidelines and shouts "Hold on, we're turning sharp!"...while on all sides echo bitter cries of "The cable cars must go!" or "The cable cars forever!"

Today, the California Street cable car still comes to a surprised halt in the middle of Chinatown with Grant Avenue's furtive mysteries spread on both sides. Sometimes, when it gets halfway up Nob Hill, it has to slide back down and start over again. But the same San Franciscans who make cowardly clutches at each other's coat-tails all through this slide-for-life, say, if the cable cars go, we might as well give the city back to the conquistadores.

Gump's thinks the time has come for foreign intervention. If *you* think so too we'd like to know.

If *you* plan to visit San Francisco some day and look forward to riding on a cable car, write us. Or, if you think that cable cars belong in limbo with clipper ships, bustles and outdoor beer gardens, by all means drop us a line.

Gump's—which has weathered the transition from clipper ships to DC 6's—is neutral. We'll see that your letters go to the proper authorities for rapt consideration.

This isn't a private fight any more—*anyone* can get into it. So will you write our San Francisco store—at 250 Post Street—and tell us how *you* feel about cable cars for heaven's sakes?

Richard Gump

GUMP'S 250 POST STREET SAN FRANCISCO HONOLULU-CARMEL

Reprinted from Time Magazine July 7, 1947

Please use the reverse side for casting your ballot

People who like big cities mostly claim that the three in this country with the most personality are San Francisco, New York and New Orleans. Except people from Chicago and Texas. They seem to prefer Chicago and Texas, but we won't go into that.

Cable cars add considerable zest to San Francisco's personality, so it appears to us at Gump's that the pros and cons should be clearly stated.

Quite a few local commuters would put it this way: sentiment is not high in the 5 o'clock rush. It sinks lower yet as the homeward-bound sees maybe three brimming cable cars in a row jingle by.

Or there are the times when you see you can just catch the car at the corner—until you notice cable cars sitting hopelessly at every corner up the street. Broken cable!

On the side of the cables is the sheer funniness of the mountain-climbing bantams. Their passengers tend to smile tolerantly instead of glare when they're shoved. No other form of transportation can make that statement!

Then there are the unhurried rides on a starry night sitting on an outside bench... the sophisticated young officers who peer down the cable slot trying to see how it works ... the pretty girl tourists who clutch the inside poles as the car starts down the hill ... Gump's being a part of San Francisco lore, too, is an interested non-combatant in this battle between tradition and progress. (Fortunately, we have both.) But we would like to have your opinions on the cable cars. So won't you write us—at 250 Post Street? We'll send your letters on to the proper authorities.

You might as well get in the scrap—everyone else is!

Richard Gump

GUMP'S

250 POST STREET

CLOCK NOTICE at GUMP'S

RICHARD B. GUMP

April 30, 1974

Today my official tie with Gump's ends. I understand that Macmillan will continue our famed merchandising tradition developed over a century and based on quality, knowledge, imagination and good taste.

I shall never forget those who had faith in my ideals and helped me build a more prominent and dominant store —

Richard B. Gump

GUMP'S MERCHANDISE DEPARTMENTS

Department 1 - Gifts	Alfredo Soriano	Ronald E. Wong
Department 18 - Bar Accessories	Director (Buyer)	Assistant Director
Department 2 - Silver	Marion Motylewski	Mrs. Marilyn T. Pagnoni
	Director (Buyer)	Assistant Director
Department 3 - Art Gallery	M. Dana Reich	
	Director	
Department 4 - Oriental Art	Gerald D. Dewey	John C. Chung
	Director	Buyer
Department 6 - Oriental Gifts	"	Mrs. Vera Anderson
		Assistant Director
Department 11 - Lamps	"	Mrs. Ulla Spear
		Assistant Director
Department 5 - Furniture.	Paul C. Faria	
Department 19 - European Antiques	Director (Buyer)	
Design Studio	Miss Eleanor M. Forbes, A.I.D.	
	Director	
Department 7 - Jewelry	Charles E. Goodmann	Miss Marilyn Klar
Department 13 - Bags & Scarves	Director (Buyer)	Assistant to Director
Department 14 - Costume Jewelry		
Department 8 - Fashion.	Miss Jane De Vivier	Mrs. Ro Fulton
	Director (Buyer)	Assistant Director
Department 9 - Glass	Mrs. Bobette Luciani	Co-Directors (Buyers)
Department 10 - China	Edward M. Matson	
Department 15 - Travel Bags.	Wilber J. Sanderson	
Department 20 - Books		
Department 16 - Baccarat Room	Miss Dina Manfredi	Mrs. Dorothy Siani
	Director (Buyer)	Assistant to Director
Department 17 - Stationery	Mrs. Bernice M. Yates	
	Director (Buyer)	
Department 22 - Custom Framing . . .	Mrs. Sally Parks	
	Director (Buyer)	

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Assistant to Controller

Mrs. Ann C. Clifford
Foreign Invoice Accountant

Mrs. Clariece B. Graham
Secretary to Richard B. Gump

Robert J. Mahoney
Display Director

David Wolfgang
Assistant Display Director

Mrs. Dolores McCarthy
Credit Manager

Per B. Nevard
Controller

Harry Orbelian
Service Superintendent (Delivery, Building Maintenan
Security)

Mrs. Eda Parodi
Personnel Manager

Wilber J. Sanderson
Advertising Director

Mrs. Lorraine Willis
Supervisor, Adjustment Department.

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Carl Waller	Vice President, Administration
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Per Nevard	Treasurer
C. E. Graham	Assistant Secretary
Raymond C. Hagel	
James McIlhenny	
Warren Smith	
Harry Orbelian	

CCM: GUMP'S, INC. — President - Richard B. Gump

- Executive Secretary - Clariece Graham
- Design Studio - Eleanor Forbes

Managing Director as of 2/18/70
Executive Vice President - Chris Stritzinger

Merchandise Manager, Assistant

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  - Jack Barker - Assistant, Merchandising & Floor Display
  - Michael O'Connor - Assistant, Administration (inc. Personne Supervision) and Stock Control
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- Jewelry - Charles Goodmann, Marilu Klar, Linda Duncan
- Oriental Antiques & Gifts; Lamps - Gerald Dewey (Joyce Mark)
  - John Chung - Buyer, Oriental Antiques
  - Vera Anderson - Assistant, Oriental
  - Ulla Spear - Assistant, Lamps
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- Adjustments - Lorraine Willis
- Audit
- Credit - Dolores McCarthy, Robert Coffman
- Expense Control
- Personnel - Eda Parodi

Service Superintendent - Harry Orbelian, Olga Flynn

- Receiving - Dominic Anzalone
- Warehousing
- Protection
- Carpentry
- Maintenance
- Services Supplies
- Delivery

Marketing Manager

- Advertising - Wilber Sanderson
- Display - Robert Mahoney

GUCKENHEIMER'S SOUR KRAUT BAND.

Just outside San Francisco's Opera House one recent night, the nine members of Guckenheimer's Sour Kraut Band shuffled silently into their musical firing position. Kappelmeister Guckenheimer raised a match-stick like a baton.

"Ready, Herr Schmidt?" he asked.

"Ya, ready," said Schmidt.

"Ready, Herr Glotz?"

"Ya, let's give mitt it out," growled gutteral Glotz.

"Ready, the rest of mine bums?"

"Ya, ya," came the chorus, "We're ready, Herr Guckenheimer."

The leader's arm swooped down, foot slapping the pavement. Ein, zwein, drei--and what went for music fractured the night air, wailing oompahs from the flugelhorn, thun derous boom-booms from the trommel, mad chiming of the glockenspiel. At that exact moment, strictly by design, the doors swung open and the homeward-bound music lovers, finishing their bee with Beethoven, emerged to be assaulted by the off-key rendition of "Kommst Ein Vogel Geflogen" (A Bird Comes Flying). To a man, the opera patrons paled.

For a moment on this March of Dimes night it was touch and go. Would the opera goers laugh or lynch? Then some one snickered. And the snicker swelled to a mighty guffaw as the crowd ganged around the huffing, puffing Sour Krauts in their ill-fitting uniforms.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," interrupted a woman in diamonds and decolletage, "what in heaven's name are you playing"?

"The March--from Dimes," said the leader, passing round his spiked helmet. Coin after coin plopped into the headgear until it was abrim with money--for polio victims, of course. Beethoven from his grave must have led the applause, it was that tremendous.

That experience was nothing new for the Sour Krauts. They are forever stealing the show. These mad musicians, probably the zaniest group in the nation, are actually staid business and professional men from the Bay Area. Their roster reads largely like a Who's Who (See Personnel List).

At the drop of an octave, the fun-loving Sour Krauts will play almost anywhere at almost any time. They think their hobby is rewarding. They've given concerts for the wounded in veteran's hospitals; they've played at lodge picnics, harvest festivals, church socials, club meetings. They also have offered their services to any political candidate who can deliver a platform to satisfy all of them, which to date has never happened.

Guckenheimer's Sour Kraut Band.

At the Sonoma Wine Festival they were solemnly awarded a prize "For Valor." In Virginia City, Nevada, fretting to play for the sake of playing, the unpredictable Sour Krauts stopped on a street corner, set up their instruments and gave an unscheduled concert for two ragged urchins and their lop-eared dog. Natives of Virginia City refer to their visit as "the greatest event since President Grant came to town.

At the dedication of a department store escalator, with the needy benefiting, the Krauts had the time of their lives. They rode the escalators while playing, and found out that, on the up-trip, their number "Alta Kammeraden" ended exactly with the ending of the ride--on the fifth and last floor escalator. Not a tootle left over. On the down-trip, "Deutschland Uber Alles" fitted to perfection. It nearly broke their hearts when they missed being invited to a brewery opening. They wanted to try playing the flugelhorn under schnapps.

Gump, formed the Sour Krauts in 1949 for no more lofty a motive, originally, than to let off steam and have fun. They invented the Guckenheimer monicker because it sounded "good and German." Since they were all musically talented, they rehearsed as often as possible to be sure they wouldn't all be in tune and on time. Another requirement was the ability to wear with dignity and aplomb a set of uniforms that obviously were classified as Army surplus shortly after the Franco-Prussian War. For the sake of additional color, they were soon calling each other by outlandish German names and talking gutteral.

With their German descent purely of the "malt and hops" variety, any resemblance to any good old-fashioned German band is absolutely accidental. Still, they say their unusual avocation has a personally practical aspect.

"If everything goes to pot," explains Herr Gump lightly, "we can always open a beer hall." What he doesn't mention is that the play-acting Sour Krauts find deep satisfaction nowadays in seeing their hobby help others.

FFC BARBARY COAST RECORDS

OOM PAH-PAH in HI-FI

the sourest german village band music ever!

FFC BARBARY COAST RECORDS

HIGH FIDELITY RIAA CURVE

oom-pah-pah in hi-fi

TM 5 33⅓ R P M

WITH THE GUCKENHEIMER SOUR KRAUT BAND

PRESENT ARMS - HI-LE-HI-LO - SCHUHPLATTLER TANZE - TRINK MIR NOCH A TROPFCHE - DAUDEAMUS - DIE WACHT AM RHEIN - UNDER THE DOUBLE EAGLE - KOMMT EIN VOGEL GEFLOGEN - LAUTERBACH - VILIA - BIER HER, BIER HER - RAIN RAIN POLKA - BLUE DANUBE - ALTE KAMERADEN MARCH - VILLAGE TAVERN POLKA

If music makes you feel good, good music should make you feel better. In the case of the Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band, however ... the most delicate nuances of which we have diligently and cautiously recorded here ... the opposite seems to be true. This music proves that you can promote good feeling, and even hilarity, with some of the sourest sounds this side of a German village square.

The Guckenheimers ... a name taken from a whiskey label because of its flugelhorn lilt ... came into being in 1949, when Richard Gump, a San Francisco art merchant of varied talents, was discussing the contemporary trend toward total commercialization of the Christmas season with several musically inclined friends in Sausalito, California ... the first town on your left when you enter America through the Golden Gate. As proof of their own untainted, free Christmas spirit they immediately formed a brassy group and played German village band music on Sausalito street corners. This aroused some amusement, if not overt good will.

Eight instruments appeared to be the upper limit of possible musical synchronization, but the repertoire of the group was enlarged to about a hundred numbers suitable to the atmosphere of the old-fashioned German band. Among the ready volunteers was George Lichty, the nationally syndicated "Grin and Bear It" cartoonist, who feels that the band is "perpetuating a dying art form".

We re-print an article written by Music and Art critic R.H. Hagen of the San Francisco Chronicle. The story was written June 3, 1951 when there were nine members of the band. Only five men from the original band are heard in this recording.

NINE MEN AGAINST THE MUSICAL WORLD

By R.H. Hagen

The Bay Area, long made famous as a music center by such organizations as the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Opera Company, has lately produced a highly inharmonious contribution to the music culture of this country in "Guckenheimer's Sour Kraut Band."

This unique organization was founded in 1949, when nine Sausalito gentlemen of various professional backgrounds and previous conditions of rectitude decided to stop playing golf, canasta or pinochle in their idle moments and start playing low German waltzes, middle high German folk songs and high German opera for anyone whose ears were insensitive enough to be able to listen to the group for as long as ten unbroken minutes.

They have been playing their own remarkable interpretations of assorted gems from the German repertoire at lodge picnics, harvest festivals, charity drives, church socials, club meetings, and even street corners with unbounded success ever since.

Much of that success has come from a combination of qualities both visual and musical. On the visual side, one of the band's strictest membership requirements is the ability to wear with dignity and aplomb a set of uniforms that obviously were classified as Army surplus shortly after the Franco-Prussian War.

On the musical side, one of the band's even stricter requirements is that each member must be constitutionally unable to play in time or on tune. To date, the membership has been limited to the original nine members who passed this acid test. They include Cartoonist George Lichty, Business Executive Richard Gump, Writer Barney Harrold, Insurance Executive Robert Entriken, Cabinet Maker William Phoedovius, Designer George Ashley, Salesman Cookie Conroy, Business Executive Harry Mohler and Architect Richard Hiatt.

This rigid selection of personnel has resulted in some highly esoteric musical achievements. The band proudly admits that it is the only musical group in nine counties that has completely mastered the art of playing "Du, Du, liegst mir im Herzen," simultaneously in three-quarter and four-four time, not to mention a version of "Under the Double Eagle," played strictly eight-to-the-bar -- a feat which, the players are quick to point out, requires the ninth member of the band to stop playing or find a less crowded bar.

Proud as the band is of these musical achievements it is prouder of the various decorations and trophies which such musicianship has earned. Not the least of these is a "Medal for Valour" which was presented to the group last year at the Sonoma Wine Festival.

* * * * * * *

This first recording of the Guckenheimer group was made under conditions ideal for the true reproduction of the unusual range reached by Dick Hiatt on the flugelhorn, George Lichty's bass drum and Bob Kellogg's tuba.

Jenny Lind Hall in Oakland was the recording location. Recording engineer, Bill Engel, who is on the staff of Ampex Corporation used the latest Ampex model 350. One mike was used for pick up. Naturally, since this was a genuine German type band we used a Telefunken microphone! Levels were set at the session and natural dynamics are achieved by the absence of "monitering". The process was repeated at Capital by setting levels, adjusting for maximum volume peaks and transferring an almost exact replica of the type master to disc. Peter Dent handled the mastering. Newly developed Westrex amplifiers and recording heads were employed.

The same worried behind-the-scenes staff was present at the Oakland session -- Richard Kepner -- financial wizzard stop-watch watcher and co-ordinator of San Francisco Records, kept notes on what was what. Al Levitt sat in a big chair with a furrowed brow shouting commands and generally confusing those about him! And here is the fruit of their labors! Welcome to it! You can expect the unusual and refreshing from San Francisco Records -- "Recorded without compromise and dedicated to documenting and preserving sounds and music."

NOTES BY RUBEN GARTERSNAKE

THE MUSICIANS

FRITZ GUCKENHEIMER -- Clarinet and Conductor, is Richard Gump, art dealer, musician, composer, painter and lecturer and organizer of the Guckenheimer Band.

* * *

EMMY SCHMID -- Flugelhorn, is Richard Hiatt, a well-known architect. The teutonic tone of his flugelhorn little resembles his caressing viola, which he played at an early age with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

LUDWIG SCHMITZ -- Trombone, is in real life George "Cookie" Conroy, whose 285 pounds is used to great advantage by the Crown-Zellerbach Paper Corporation testing the tensile strength of paper tissue.

HANS SCHMID -- Drum, is George Lichty who has a splendid musical background from the University of Michigan where he studied Roman band instruments and Creative Listening. He is, incidentally, the nationally-famous cartoonist of "Grin and Bear It".

OTTO SCHMITZ -- Clarinet, is more formally known as Robert Entriken, top executive in San Francisco for the National Surety Corporation. His earlier musical high was reached when he played clarinet in the University of Kansas Band, seated in the top row of the university stadium.

HUBI SCHMITT -- Trumpet, is Robert McDonnell who has worked under many conductors. In fact, Bob McDonnell is continuing his career as a fireman on the passenger trains of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

JOHANN SCHWEIST -- Clarinet, is Hubert S. White, Jr. His excellent clarinet tone confused the other members of the band until they learned of his playing symphonic works while a college student. He is Assistant Professor of Dramatic Art at the University of California.

HEINRICH SCHWEIST -- Tuba, is Bob Kellogg, more deeply dedicated to music than any other member of the band. He plays hot, cool, symphonic and German tuba, in addition to the operation of two music stores.

COVER DESIGN GEORGE LICHTY

Side 1 POET AND PEASANT OVERTURE • ACH ICH BIN SO MÜDE POLKA • HAMBURGER WALTZ • WARUM SO SCHNELL GALLOP • GESELLSCHAFTS LIEDER • HORTENSIE POLKA • L'ESTUDIANTINA • WIEN—WIEN

Side 2 TINKER POLKA • SKATERS WALTZ • SOBRA LAS OLAS • SPRINGTIME POLKA • WIENER BLUT • TYROLER WALZER • DER LUSTIGE MUSIKANT POLKA • DRINK MEIN LIEBLING

SOUR KRAUT IN HI-FI

The Guckenheimer Sour Kraut Band

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FRITZ GUCKENHEIMER

Vice Presidents
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GRETCHEN SCHICKER
RUDI SCHIESSL
HEDWIG SCHIFFMAN
LUDWIG SCHIMMEL
FRIEDRICH SCHLOSSER
UTE SCHLUMBERGER
ERNST SCHMID
FRIEDA SCHMIDT
HUGO SCHMIDT
KATI SCHMIDT
LOTTE SCHMIDT
OTTO SCHMIDT
HANS SCHMITT
WILHELM SCHMITT
OLGA SCHMITZ
RUDI SCHMITZ
EYKE SCHNEIDER
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KATI SCHMIDT
LOTTE SCHMIDT
OTTO SCHMIDT
HANS SCHMITT
WILHELM SCHMITT
OLGA SCHMITZ
RUDI SCHMITZ
EYKE SCHNEIDER
FRITZ SCHNEIDER
OTTO SCHNEIDER

General Director
FRITZ GUCKENHEIMER

Dear Music-Lovers:

One evening as I wandered along the San Francisco waterfront, dreaming of my youth and homeland, I heard the dulcet wail of a foghorn rebound off the cliffs that support Telegraph Hill. Here at last, I thought, is the exact timbre-quality of the wald-horn echoing through the rocky crags of my native Bavarian Alps.

This nostalgic tone-experience was the inspiration and locale for the record "Sour Kraut in Hi-Fi" .... a synthesis of Altdeutschbierfestkultur.

Fritz Guckenheimer

CABLE ADDRESS:
DAMPFKESSELWERKE

Music Committee
FRITZ GUCKENHEIMER

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GRETCHEN SCHICKER
RUDI SCHIESSL
HEDWIG SCHIFFMAN
LUDWIG SCHIMMEL
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RUDI SCHMITZ
EYKE SCHNEIDER
FRITZ SCHNEIDER
OTTO SCHNEIDER

FRITZ GUCKENHEIMER—Clarinet and Conductor—is Richard Gump, art dealer, musician, composer, painter and lecturer and organizer of the Guckenheimer Band.

ERNST SCHMID—Flügelhorn—is Richard Hiatt, a well-known architect. The Teutonic tone of the flügelhorn little resembles his caressing viola, which he played at an early age with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

LUDWIG SCHMITZ—Trombone—is in real life George "Cookie" Conroy, whose 285 pounds is used to great advantage by the Crown-Zellerbach Paper Corporation testing the tensile strength of paper tissue.

HUGO SCHMID—Drum—is George Lichty who has a splendid musical background from the University of Michigan where he studied Roman band instruments and Creative Listening. He is, incidentally, the nationally famous cartoonist of "Grin and Bear It."

OTTO SCHMITS—Clarinet—is more formally known as Robert Entriken, executive in San Francisco for Fireman's Fund Insurance Group. He claims the highest point of his musical career was reached way up in the 86th row of the stadium at the University of Kansas where he played in the University Band.

RUDI SCHMITT—Cornet—is Robert McDonnell who has worked under many conductors as he is a fireman on passenger trains for Southern Pacific Railroad.

WOLFGANG SCHWETT—Cornet—is Dean L. Coleman, an inspector for the Pacific Fire Rating Bureau in Oakland. He is a brass teacher in his spare time and hopes none of his pupils (including his own five children) hear this recording.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN SCHMIDTZ III—Clarinet—is Paul Faria, an interior designer, cabinetmaker and leader of his own dance band. He had a difficult time readjusting his intonation to the peculiarities of the German village-band tone.

HEINRICH SCHWERDT—Tuba—is Bob Kellogg, more deeply dedicated to music than any other member of the band. He plays hot, cool, symphonic and German tuba, in addition to operating two music stores.

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BY LISA HARRINGTON

UC PaoPao?

It's possible. If the dreams of a merchant prince and a group of Berkeley scientists come true, the University will soon have a biological research station in the South Pacific. Last December, Richard Gump, who for 25 years managed San Francisco's exclusive Gumps store, donated his Polynesian estate—35 acres of verdant slopes along Cooks Bay, Moorea—to Cal. The property, with its high volcanic plugs, turquoise blue lagoons, and waterfalls that appear and disappear as suddenly as the tropical showers, is, in the words of University biologist George Barlow, "a paradise for basic research."

Two years ago, Barlow and entomologist Werner Loher took a break from their campus work to appraise the property's suitability as a research site for Berkeley. Flying from Los Angeles to Tahiti (eight hours), they landed in Papeete, the bustling capital of the Society Islands, and boarded a boat bound for Moorea. In PaoPao, they were met by a Toyota jeep and two large Polynesian men who then drove the scientists past dense groves of breadfruit and coconut trees to the lush plantation of Richard Gump. They had two weeks to explore the waters and land on and around the estate. Long before their time was up, they concluded that access to Moorea could expand Berkeley's research far beyond current limits. When the word reached the campus, scholars from all branches of science, including anthropology, herpetology, botany, ichthyology, paleontology, and geology, made plans to visit the site.

"I am so pleased to find that this property is as valuable to science as it has been to me," Gump told us in his San Francisco penthouse last spring. The 76-year-old art collector, who also has homes in Florence, Italy, and Badgastein, Germany, was in town for the performance of his own composition, a symphonic poem based on the tale of King Lear. It was played by the University Symphony, conducted by Michael Senturia, and "turned out rather well," reported Gump, who invited his new scientist friends to the private concert. A composer of both classical and modern music ("no rock"), Gump also paints. His watercolors (many of them are Polynesian scenes) hang in major collections around the world. A lecturer on aesthetics, he also has written popular books on jade—and one called *Good Taste Costs No More.*

The Moorea land was left to the Gump family's corporation 30 years ago to pay off a customer's debt. When the Gumps dissolved the corporation and sold the store in 1969, Richard Gump took over complete ownership of the South Seas estate. He considered bequeathing it to his alma mater, Stanford, but on the advice of a friend, San Francisco attorney Louis Heilbron '28, he chose Cal. "The University of California has research dealing with oceans and marine life. It will make better use of the gift," explains Gump, who is as enthusiastic as the scientists are about the development of the land. (He has kept 12 of the 35 acres in a living trust so that he may continue to spend several months each year on the island.) "Evidently there's plant and animal life on Moorea that may help them to solve many mysteries about the earth."

And what do the scientists have to say?

"This is an unbelievable opportunity," says Barlow, obviously delighted that Gump chose to contribute to Cal's program. "Scientists in the Western world don't have much opportunity to go to good stations in the tropics. There are stations on the great barrier reef of Australia, and there are reef stations on New Guinea, Fiji, and Guam, but they're remote—and there always are problems when you're a guest in someone else's laboratory."

There are other advantages, too. Unlike Tahiti, Moorea is industry-free, sparsely populated, and not troubled by pollution of its air and water. In fact, some of the forests there are said to be virtually as untouched as they were when British mariner Captain Cook sailed to the islands to observe the Transit of Venus in 1769. The political climate in French Polynesia is stable (important for long-term studies, says Barlow, whose research in Nicaragua has been postponed indefinitely). The intellectual climate also is conducive to scientific inquiry. The French already have a research base on Moorea, where they cultivate freshwater shrimp. Finally, and perhaps the best news of all, Moorea lies outside of the typhoon belt that wreaks havoc on other South Pacific islands.

"It's the best of both worlds," says Barlow, who points out that it only takes 10 minutes by air to reach Papeete for supplies, equipment, and good phone connections.

He continues: "Moorea is an outlier. Most of the tropical fauna emanates from the Indo-Australian Archipelago. The farther east you move, the more things drop out until you get to a place like Hawaii, where the fauna is not terribly interesting for tropical biologists. Even though Moorea lies as far east as Hawaii, it has a much richer selection of plant and animal life, apparently because there are more intermediate islands that act as stepping stones for the organisms to get there."

As a marine biologist, Barlow spends most of his time in Moorea under water. He's found the deep bays ideal for diving, and there's a large coral reef where the water is five to ten feet deep ("perfect for snorkeling") just off Gump's beach. "The fish are very tame and accessible there," says Barlow, who hopes one day to use the spot to introduce students to marine biology. Of special interest to the diving professor are the monogamous fish in Cooks Bay. "Why do *these* fish pair for life?" asks Barlow, since fidelity is rarely nature's way. The fish Barlow found off Moorea also abandon their offspring at birth. "Their behavior raises several questions," remarks Barlow, who believes the answers may offer insights into the bonds between men and women.

Werner Loher is impressed with Polynesia because it has crickets. During the past 12 years, he has studied the reproductive behavior of Australian crickets; in the process he has become quite fond of the melodious insects. "Their song is like eternal spring," says Loher, who has followed the tune around the world. (He is serenaded daily in his Giannini Hall office by a Tahitian cricket that shares his desk.) The crickets on Moorea actually belong to the same family as those in Northern Australia. However, on Moorea, the shiny creature

"Treasure Island"
October 1982
California Monthly

is in the enviable position of living without predators. "They are quite abundant there," says Loher, beaming.

Loher wants to find out whether Australian and Polynesian crickets speak the same language, "whether the song has changed in pitch and rhythm during evolutionary time." So he is coaxing his Australian males into courting his Tahitian females. The outcome of the courtship may provide clues about how long ago the crickets were separated from one another. Loher and his students also hope to use the island for studies of temporal distribution of circadian rhythms and migration patterns of the insects.

"How these islands were colonized is of basic interest to all of us," says Loher, "but first we must know what's really there." So University scientists are working with the French on the herculean task of making a survey of all living things on Moorea. Once they've found what's on the island, they'll look for explanations of how the plants and animals came to live there (via migrating birds, ocean currents, man?) and why there are no native snakes.

So far, Richard Gump has been the University's primary source of support for the research station. Not only has he donated his land and invited the scientists to use his home and jeep during their visits to Moorea, he also furnished them with a seven-kilowatt generator and a new boat dock; last month he announced that he will build a small dormitory on the estate. But Gump, Barlow, and Loher also hope to attract the attention and support of alumni. Several are already involved, including Victor and Frederic Siu, both Class of '51, who are successful businessmen in Tahiti. Victor is a Mobil Oil executive; Frederic, who runs a construction company, is preparing the building plans for the site. The Polynesian goverment, by waiving the transfer of ownership taxes (contingent on the establishment of a research station within five years), contributed $135,000 to the University.

With so much in favor of a research site on the estate, there is but one drawback, Money. Berkeley barely has enough funds to support projects, old and new, on campus, let alone thousands of miles off campus. "We've been told that we must come up with new sources of money," says Barlow, who projects construction and equipment costs of $300,000 for the station. Another $100,000 per year will be needed to pay for a resident director and the station's upkeep. "We're looking for an endowment that will generate enough interest to support the station year after year," Barlow adds.

During a recent trip to Moorea, Richard Gump was visited by one of his attorneys, who toured the estate and talked with Gump about the scientists and their plans. When Gump asked him what he thought about all of it, the attorney gazed across the bay, shrugged, and said, "Well, it's easy to see why they want to come here."

"Don't kid yourself," answered Gump. "They're not coming for the view."

The Richard B. Gump South Pacific Biological Research Station

[March 1987]

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE DEAN GIANNINI HALL BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

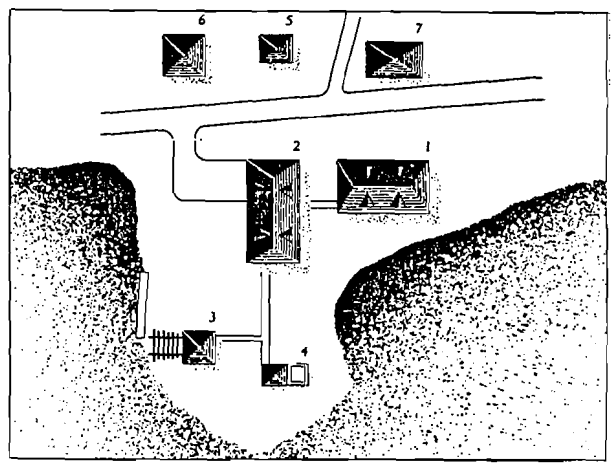
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to introduce you to the new UC Berkeley Biological Station on the island of Moorea, French Polynesia. In this report, I will summarize its history, briefly describe its facilities and ongoing research, and list some recent achievements.

A Most Generous Gift

In December 1981, Mr. Richard Gump of San Francisco transferred to the University of California at Berkeley the title of his 35-acre estate on the island of Moorea on the condition that a biological station be built and dedicated to research, preservation of the environment and to the benefit of the Polynesian people. On March 9, 1985, the Station was inaugurated with the dedication of its first building, a dormitory, a donation from Mr. Gump. The guests included the representative of UC Berkeley, Vice Chancellor Park, officials from the Polynesian and French governments and their respective research organizations, and members of the Tahitian business community.

The dormitory is a two-story structure on the West shore of Cook's Bay, designed in Tahitian style by architect Patrick Siu, and blends beautifully and unobtrusively into the environment. Following the dedication of the building, several speakers stressed the Station's mission as an international center for research in marine and terrestrial biology and the opportunity it affords for collaboration with our Tahitian/French colleagues.



- 1 *Dormitory*
- 2 *Laboratory*
- 3 *Dive locker*
- 4 *Aquarium*
- 5 *Insectary*
- 6 *Greenhouse*
- 7 *Workshops*

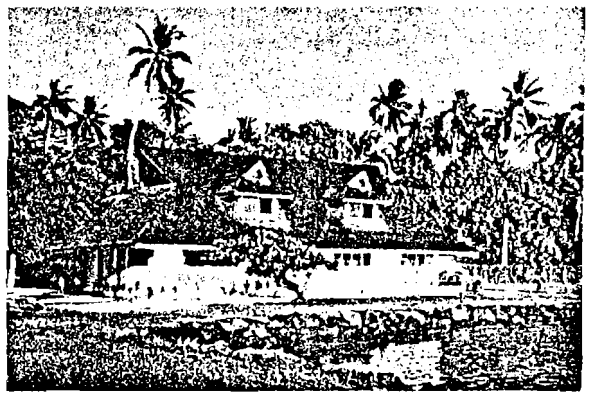
The Operation of the Station

We have hired Rick Steger, a recent Ph.D. from the Zoology Department at UC Berkeley, as Station Manager. Rick is an expert on the behavioral ecology of marine crustaceans. He will continue his research there, in addition to taking care of the Station. Rick gathered considerable experience for the job while working toward his doctorate at the Smithsonian Institute in Panama. Two Tahitians are also employed part-time to maintain and improve the Station.

Facilities

The Station's dormitory is now fully furnished and can accommodate 10 visiting scientists. The ground floor consists of two bedrooms, a large living room, a kitchen and a communal bathroom. The main sleeping area is upstairs, conveniently partitioned for privacy. Moorea has finally obtained general electricity and the Station has recently been connected to its network. Our defect-prone generator has been relegated for use as a backup system in anticipation of the island's frequent power failures.

■ *The dormitory*



Our equipment pool is still modest and consists of a pickup truck, an 18-foot motor boat, scuba diving gear, an aircompressor, and several dissecting and compound microscopes. We also have the basis for a library on the fauna and flora of the South Seas and its islands, donated by members of the departments of Zoology and Entomology on campus.

Visitors and Research at the Station

The main objective of our new Station is to create a focus for research in tropical island biology. Although we do not yet have a laboratory, scientists interested in field studies can work out of the dormitory—particularly on projects in marine and terrestrial biosystematics, natural history, ecology and behavior.

The International Coral Reef Congress convened at Tahiti last May. This gave us the opportunity to introduce the Station to the international scientific community. In addition to the many requests for information, 25 conference scientists visited the Station for several days and surveyed the marine environment for the feasibility of their projects, such as the taxonomy and ecology of marine algae, coral reef degradation and recuperation, behavioral ecology of reef fishes, symbiosis between fish and corals, and the biology of sea turtles.

Recent Research

Apart from such pilot studies, four longer term projects have so far been pursued:

☐ In 1984, E. Schlinger (UC Berkeley, Dept. of Entomology) initiated an arthropod survey at different altitudes, catching insects and spiders by hand during daytime and setting traps for the night-active creatures. Over 50,000 specimens were collected, among them several endemic species new to science. The survey will continue.

☐ Over a period of three years, from 1982 to 1984, W. Loher and L. Orsak, (UC Berkeley, Dept. of Entomology) studied the acoustic behavior of field crickets and their nocturnal singing rhythmicity. Crickets are excellent models for studying the effects of time shifts on our own biological clock. A comparison between the temporal occurrence of cricket calling in the natural environment and under standardized laboratory conditions at Berkeley yielded surprising results: provided the same light-dark cycle was employed, the times of onset and termination of their nightly singing were similar, and so was the duration of singing activity. This similarity was obtained in spite of substantial differences in light intensity and

quality and in the absence of dusk and dawn conditions in a simplified laboratory setting. The overriding importance of photoperiod in the regulation of circadian singing rhythms now paves the way for studies on the functions of behavioral rhythmicity in nature and the search for the integrating biological clock.

☐ During a five-week period in 1985, D. Garcia, (UC Berkeley, Biological Control) studied the mosquito problem on Moorea and possible ways for its biological control. Three mosquito species were studied. A mosquito pathogen was employed against larval stages of all three species. Whereas two species were found to be extremely sensitive to low dosages of the pathogen, which was effective for as long as 10 days, one species was immune to even high dosages. A significant reduction in the numbers of mosquitoes of all three species would be achieved, however, if an organized disposal program of man-made breeding sources such as throw-away containers, etc. could be launched. These studies are of obvious benefit to Tahitian tourism.

☐ The mission of P. Tsao, (UC Riverside, Dept. of Plant Pathology) in the Fall 1985 strikingly demonstrated the power and success of international cooperation. While following up a request from the Polynesian Government for a specialist in diseases on vanilla, I was fortunate to find P. Tsao, who is one of the foremost experts on fungal diseases. The three-week investigation was co-sponsored by the Polynesian Government and by the Station through a grant from Mr. Gump. Working with the Tahitian plant pathologist L. Mu, they showed by pathogen isolation and plant inoculation that two species of fungi, *Phytophthora palmivora* and *P. parasitica* are the primary cause of vanilla root rot and a vanilla blight, which causes defective brown spots on all parts of the plant. These new findings should help the Polynesian Ministry of Agriculture reorient their future research efforts and develop effective control measures for this devastating disease, so that eventually vanilla production will be brought back to the economically important level it had once enjoyed.

Cooperation with our French colleagues also extends to basic research projects. We have signed an "Intent of Cooperation" with the Environmental Center at Opunohu Bay, located about seven km down the road from the Station. This French laboratory has been of great assistance to us and we are now planning to do a joint survey of fishes in Cook's Bay and the lagoon surrounding the island.

Financial Status of the Station

To date, the Station consists of one building—the dormitory. To become fully functional, we need a laboratory and several support structures, such as divelocker, aquarium, insectary, greenhouse and a workshop. An illustrated brochure which details our needs is available upon request. We are currently seeking funds for completing the Station and for an operating endownment. Understandably, State of California funds cannot be used for our project.

■ *The proposed laboratory*

Interested colleagues are cordially invited to use the Station for their research within the aforementioned fields of study. I also welcome inquiries from individuals who would like to know more about the Station and who are interested in supporting the critical biological research being conducted in this unique and scientifically important Pacific region.

The Station fees are $15.00/night or $400.00/month and are kept intentionally low to make a stay affordable. A modest fee is imposed for the use of the boat and scuba-diving gear. Applications will be accepted by Dr. Werner Loher, Department of Entomology, 201 Wellman Hall, UC Berkeley, CA 94720, phone: 415-642-0975.

The Richard B. Gump South Pacific Biological Research Station welcomes you.

Sincerely,
Werner Loher
Director

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