

Kann Imports

Our Story

Our 64 year
journey
with quality.

*"I shall pass this way
but once, therefore
any good that I can do,
let me do it now, for I
shall not pass this way
again."* Anonymous

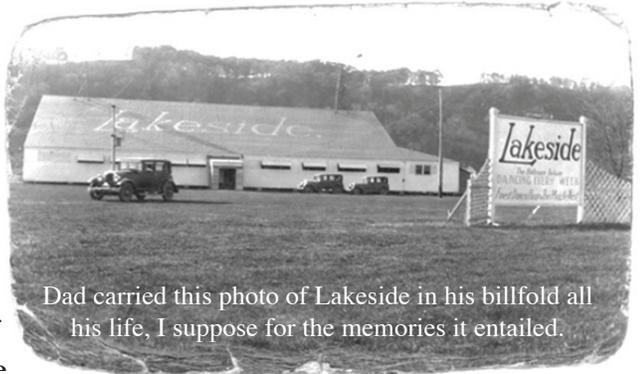


Our Story begins in the 1920's with my father, Carl Kann.

Dad was firstly a musician. He convinced his Uncle Henry into buying him his first saxophone before he was a teenager. He squeaked and tooted through a year as the only male member of the Guttenberg All Girls Band and discovered that music was his "reason for living". He loved music, all kinds and on all instruments.

His father, William, was indulgent and periodically entertained his 5 children with a new musical instrument. He eventually built Lakeside, a local dance hall just so his children could have a nice place to enjoy the music they all loved.

You never got tired of dancing on the unique "floating" floor of Lakeside. It was built of birdseye maple and set on large springs.

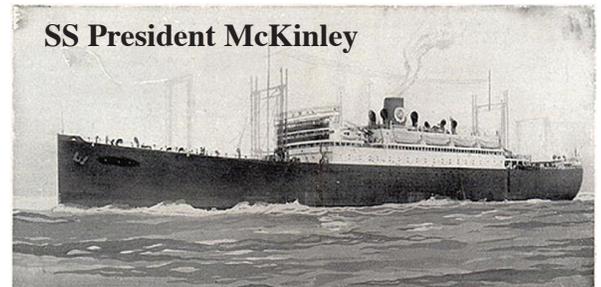


Dad carried this photo of Lakeside in his billfold all his life, I suppose for the memories it entailed.

You literally "swayed" with the music on this one of a kind dance floor.

By the time Dad finished high school, he could respond with music on just about any instrument for over 2500 different melodies. Hum it and he could play it. He was already playing with a professional orchestra and liked it. Disillusioned with college, he was saved from the classroom with a telegram from Vic Myers in Portland, Oregon inviting him to join them at the Multnomah Hotel

The Multnomah was only a beginning for the band. They met Captain Kohlmaster of the Dollar Steamship Line at the hotel. He invited them on his next Pacific rim tour aboard the SS President McKinley.



SS President McKinley

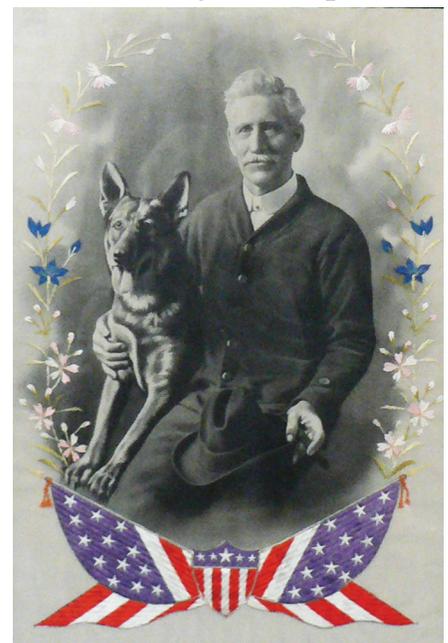
Carl was only 17 in 1927 and about to develop a dream.



The cruise was more than a musical tour for Carl. It was an enlightenment. He marveled in the artwork, the ivory carving, the wood carving, the precious stones, the statuary at each port.

"Landing in Yokohama (1927) on a Sunday afternoon, Japanese artists were showing and selling their wares on the dock to the passengers on the ship. I had carried with me this picture of my father in a paper frame but it was damaged by salt water. One of the artists, seeing the picture, asked if he could do the picture in silk. He said he could have it finished for me on our return trip, but it was necessary for him to keep my photo. I took a bit of teasing from my shipmates, who warned me I would most likely never see my fathers picture again. However, on our return trip some 3 months later, this artist was waiting for me on dockside holding up this picture for me to identify. The cost was \$2.00. It taught me to have a trust in humans that has inspired me all my life." Carl Kann

Dad met his inspiration on this cruise ship in the form of Captain John Wanamaker, who traveled the world to purchase art and art crafts for his Philadelphia department store. Captain John was intrigued by Dad's youth and capability as a musician. He and Dad visited every evening after dinner and music, Captain John with his cigar and Dad listening intently to his stories. Captain John gave Dad his first piece of advise. "Make a lovely place and your customers will come to you". It became Dad's dream.



The dream was planted but the timing was wrong.

The economy of the 1930's was suffering under a depression and even a musician couldn't find meaningful work.

Instead, Dad made the most serious decision of his life. He married Mom, Juanita. They remained "Sweethearts" for more that 65 years, but it was a rough start in the middle of the Great Depression.

They had a song in the 1930's. Something about "two could live as cheaply as one". They lied. You have to work twice as hard.

More meaningful: The Chinese have a saying, "without rice, even the cleverest housewife cannot cook."

For years his dream was just that, a dream of the beautiful artwork that was waiting for his discovery.

Finally, in 1947, returned from his tour of duty, Dad & Mom, took their savings and ventured for their dream experiment. They used the small building next to their home on River Park Drive in Guttenberg IA just across the street from the Mississippi River.

Dad built the first cabinets for display. Mom set up the displays, and I, only 14, helped paint, waxed floors and made signs. It was bottom-up learning.



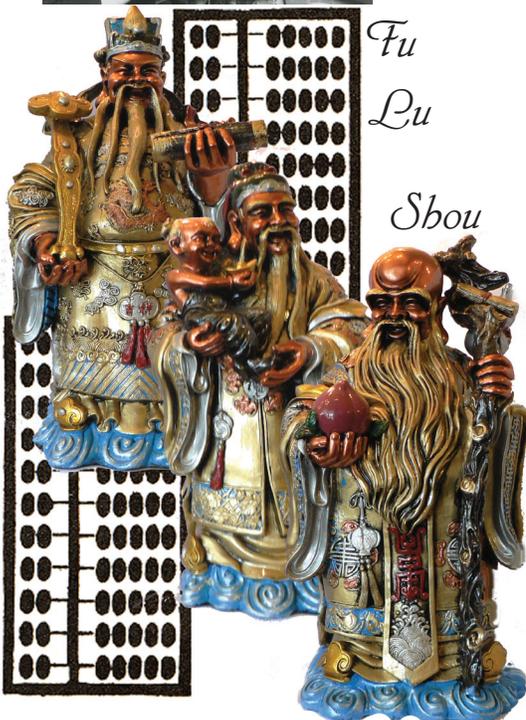
We were on our way!

about 1949



Mom became the corner stone upon which Dad anchored.

By the time 3 children had arrived (Lee July 20, 1933, Barbara Aug 23, 1935, and Steven Feb 4, 1942) World War II needed soldiers. Dad was drafted into the Navy in 1943.



Fu

Lu

Shou

*the Three Stars
Gods of Blessings,
Prosperity
and Longevity*

*The Rice pattern from
China is
a centuries old design.*



We began our first advertising efforts long before the computer was imagined. I made the drawings, black and white line drawings, for our first newsletters.

“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”
Confucius

There were long hours at my drawing board.

I was learning and having fun at it. I didn't realize I was “working”.



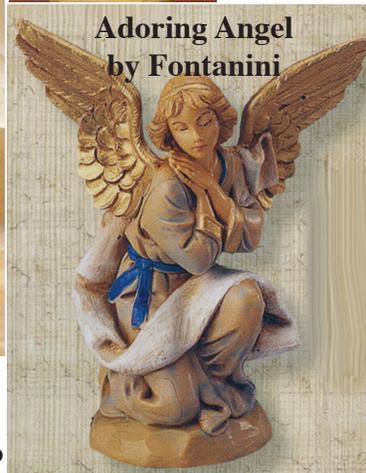
St Andrew



There were woodcarvings from Italy.



As wood and carvers became more scarce we found the wood-like figures of Fontanini. Poured in a new type of resin product that looked like wood, the Fontanini figures were unbreakable and still affordable. Great for children to learn about the Nativity.



Adoring Angel by Fontanini

Berta Hummel



Sister Maria Innocentia Hummel



Berta grew up with a pencil and paper in her hands.

Sometimes Berta's ideas came to her so fast as a child she earned the name of “Das Hummele” or the “Bumblebee”, because she darted around so quickly trying to do everything at once. W. Goebel eventually used the Bumblebee as her signature on her early figures.



Telling Her Secret

We don't realize how difficult it was for Europe to recover from WWII. It was twice as difficult for the nuns who had had their livelihood of teaching slowly closed to them by the Nazi government. Sister Innocentia augmented the convent income with drawings of the children in her care for post cards and thus began her momentous career.

Rounded cheeks, softly shaded, chubby hands in trouser pockets, tiny feet in oversized shoes.

These were the images Berta drew.

Sister Innocentia passed away on November 6, 1946 as a result of chronic tuberculosis. Her drawings remained with the convent. W. Goebel used these drawings to create the 3 dimensional figures that we all know so well. In other words, Berta never really saw her drawings in the 3 dimensional figures that we all know.



Chick Girl

The German Hummel factory was closed in October 2008 but it doesn't diminish the impact Berta made on the world of art craft.