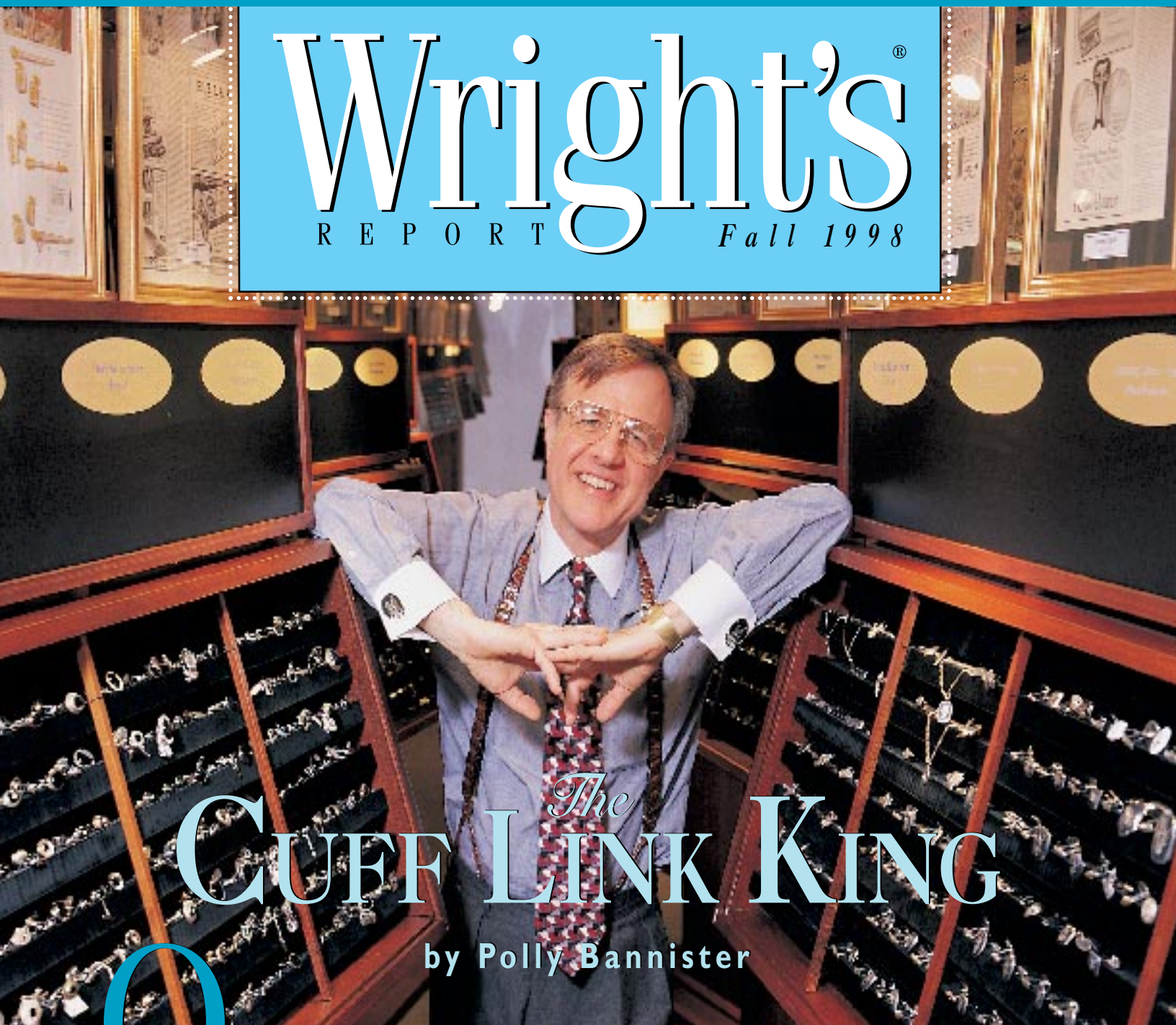


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The CUFF LINK KING

by Polly Bannister

ON THE DAY that I was to meet Claude Jeanloz, executive director of the world's only cuff link museum, he was late. His receptionist said he never missed appointments and explained that his 6-seat Malibu plane had lost an engine and he had to land in Concord, New Hampshire.

Claude's daily commute is from Millers Falls, Massachusetts, to Conway, New Hampshire. Nearly every day, all year long, he takes his plane. In 26 years of flying Claude has never had to make a forced landing.

Acting as executive director of the Cuff Link Museum is actually a very

small part of Claude's professional life. He is one of New England's most successful entrepreneurs. A mechanical engineer turned business consultant, Claude founded Renovator's Supply, manufacturer of quality hardware and other items for the home, in the late 1970s. From the

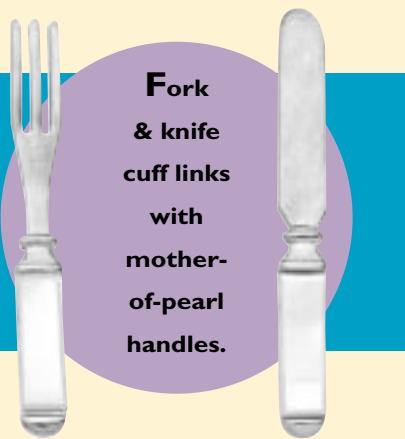
Cuff Link King, continued on page 2

The Cuff Link Museum
71 Hobbs Street
Conway, NH 03818
603-447-8500
Open 9-4 ~ Monday-Friday

Cuff Link

MUSEUM

The Cuff Link Museum is a nonprofit organization of which you can become a member. Its director recognizes the addictive quality of cuff links and says you're likely to want to buy a pair. Cuff links are available for purchase at the museum shop. *Call for a catalog: 1-888-546-5749.*



Fork & knife cuff links with mother-of-pearl handles.



All kinds of special interests, hobbies, and sports are represented in the collection, including the equestrian cuff link, pictured above.

From Ritsch to Cassini, Claude

Cuff Link King, continued from page 1

factory housed in an old mill building in Millers Falls, Renovator's Supply manufactures and distributes everything from wrought iron pulls, to brass door knockers, to vintage sinks and Victorian hardware, to just about anything you'd want for your home. By the mid-1980s, *Inc. Magazine* named Renovator's Supply one of the 35 fastest-growing companies in the country. Six years ago Claude bought Yield House, well-known maker of reproduction furniture for fifty years. It was then that he started his daily Massachusetts to New Hampshire commute.

The Cuff Link Museum is housed on the third floor of Yield House Industries in Conway. The building, located on Hobbs Street, off West Main, is industrial looking, a factory, not a museum. But don't let this fool you — once inside you'll be mesmerized by row upon row of cherry-colored pedestal cases, chock-full of cuff links, a collection that numbers over 50,000. Above the cases oval plates describe the contents. For every category of gem and metal the cuff links are broken down by shape: "Rhinestones: *round, oval, square, rectangle*," and so forth.

The specialty and novelty cuff links piqued my interest most. For example, professions are denoted by tiny emblems: *silver scales for a lawyer, gold caduceus for a doctor, little gears that really turn for the engineer, a camera, a paintbrush, cowboy boots, and even a clown.*

The American Association of Petroleum Geologists might have presented the 1917 pair of oil drills to one of their retiring executives. There are tourist attractions: *a small Eiffel Tower, an Empire State Building, and Niagara Falls.*

Planes, Trains & Automobiles

All manner of male interests are represented: *weapons, warriors with guns and swords, cannons, and rifles; silver, gold, and gold-plated cars (imagine any model you can, plus related items like parking meters, stoplights, spark plugs, and manufacturer's logos), trains, boats, bicycles, and planes.* Sports, especially golf and fishing, are widely portrayed, and the section called "Wine, Women, and Song" has Playboy bunnies in sizes that range from discreet to ostentatious. Interspersed throughout the exhibit are monograms by the thousands. Most feature the initials in gold or silver, but some are more elegant, with gems set in platinum.

I was about halfway through the cases when Claude appeared. He apologized for keeping me waiting and didn't seem ruffled about his life-threatening glide into the Concord airport. He had on a pressed blue shirt with white collar and French cuffs. I looked down at his wrist and inquired, "Did you wear your lucky cuff links today?" He replied with a smile, "I never thought of them as such, but I guess so." They were stunning, small squares of diamond and sapphire set in




Claude Jeanloz has amassed the largest collection of

gold that he “picked up in London five years ago.” A far cry from the giant, Liberace-style, ruby-studded links I’d just been gawking at.

Since his godmother gave him his first pair at the age of 14, Claude seldom, if ever, wears a shirt without cuff links. “They were gold, oval shaped, with our family crest,” he reminisced. Claude is Swiss born and educated, and I could not help but think that in his work and hobby he has the Swiss appreciation of precision. My intuition was confirmed as we walked through the collection and he described the evolution of cuff link fasteners. “Early on we see the simple barbell,” he said as he pointed to a lovely pair of women’s hand-carved mother-of-pearl cuff links from the early 1800s. “Then the metal linkage

appeared,” he continued. “This is a brass



chain fastener from the late 1800s, when we saw a lot of testing of different closures.” He stopped at a case full of Art Deco- and Art Nouveau-styled cuff links — sharp angles, rich-colored gems against striking black onyx or white mother-of-pearl. “In the 1920s came snappers, or separables,” he explained, “two distinct pieces that snap together.” As we walked up and down the aisles he identified periods by fasteners: “Here’s the bullet and the shank” — and with a grin — “Oh, and the wrap-arounds of the 1950s, which I would never wear.” I looked in the case at these huge, gold mesh links with flashy written all over them.

The cuff link cases are not labeled with

dates or dollar values. The museum has deliberately done this to decrease the possibility of theft. “The valuable ones are displayed right alongside the cheap ones,” he says. The entire collection is valued at about \$2 million, clearly not the culmination of Saturdays spent at flea markets and antique shops. This is a lifetime’s collection, but in the past five years Claude has gone into guerrilla mode, with 300 scouts hunting and buying cuff links and related material. “It has taken nearly five years and the full-time efforts of three people to get this display up,” said Claude, “and I still have boxes and boxes to be catalogued, and another 4,000 to 5,000 cuff links still in the back room.”

Cuff Links in Context

It isn’t just the cuff links themselves that Claude is crazy about, it is all the memorabilia and cuff link literature too. Above every display case you’ll find framed pages from magazines advertising cuff links. A 1924 *Literary Digest*, 1920 *Vanity Fair*, 1952 *Collier’s*, 1938 *Esquire* depict happy dads receiving a pair from Swank. Another Swank ad in a 1952 *Saturday Evening Post* reads, “Be a smart Santa, Men Prefer Swank.” The men look like they stepped off the set of “Father Knows Best.” Tucked in the ads you’ll see album jackets, each with the recording artist wearing snazzy cuff links. Henry Mancini in 1964, Peter, Paul & Mary in 1978; I’ll bet you

never guessed Bob Dylan wore cuff links on his 1965 album *Bringing It All Back Home*. An illustration on the cover of a 1960 album of Bob & Ray shows them with monograms B&R.

Claude showed me some of his best liked. “Few of my favorites are ones that I would actually wear,” he said, as he pointed to a matching gold knife and fork with luminous mother-of-pearl handles. “One of my all-time favorites,” he said, gazing at the case. Next, we stopped at the case of miniatures. “These little ones are for children,” he said, marveling at how a tiny pair with flowers had remained intact over the years. There was a small circa 1820 portrait of a child’s face set in sterling silver. In another case he pointed out a rare Army Air Corps pair of 18-karat gold with a very high quality ¼-karat diamond. “Originally I specialized in high-end gems and period jewelry,” he commented, indicating a ¾-karat diamond tie bar that matched the Army Air Corps cuff links. “The set is valued at \$12,000. Now the collection has a little of everything, much of it nonprecious stones like agates, plastics like Bakelite, leather, and how about this little fur lion with green eyes!” Next we stopped at the kinetics, what we nowadays call interactive — little silver balls that spin, music boxes, watches, an abacus, a thermometer, and a compass.

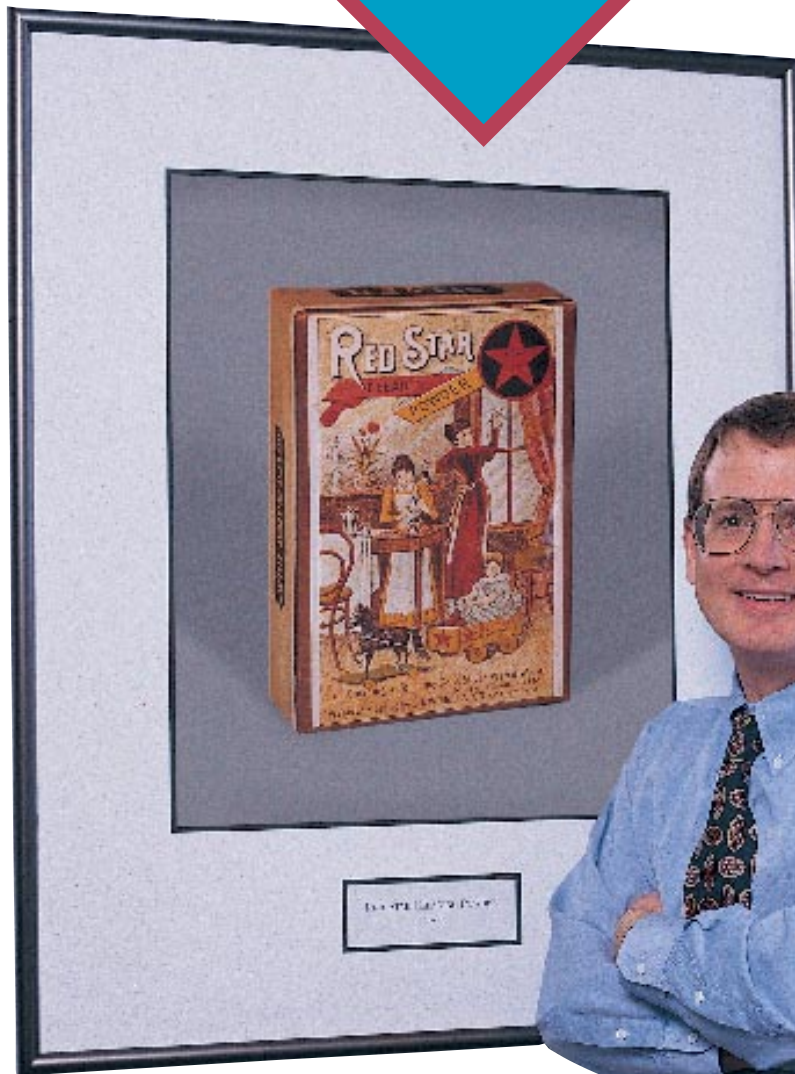
At the Cuff Link Museum you’ll see every stone imaginable: *tiger’s eye, moss agate, jade, turquoise, amethyst, lapis, sapphire, onyx, and many others*. From the Orient there are cuff links made of ivory and bone. I stared at a carved

Cuff links in the world.

ivory Chinese man who was old and wise looking in his pointed hat that had been hand-etched to look woven. “The bulk of the collection comes from the United States and England,” reported Claude, “but I have 212 countries represented.”

We ended our visit in one of the Yield House offices, where Claude has two large chests, the kind architects use for storing drawings. He opened the shallow drawers and pulled out huge stacks of loose photographs. “I have so much cuff link-related stuff that I don’t have room to display,” he commented sadly. “We’re brand-new and already have outgrown the space.

People say I should move the museum to Las Vegas, New York, or Boston, but I like it here. This is just about the only place besides the outlets to come on a rainy day during a White Mountain vacation.” He pulled out a photograph dated 3/23/60. It is of Khrushchev in a car on his first visit to France. He waves his arm high in the air, his cuff link glistening in the sunlight. **W**



John B. Wright, 5th generation, with Red Star Cleaning Powder, introduced in 1874

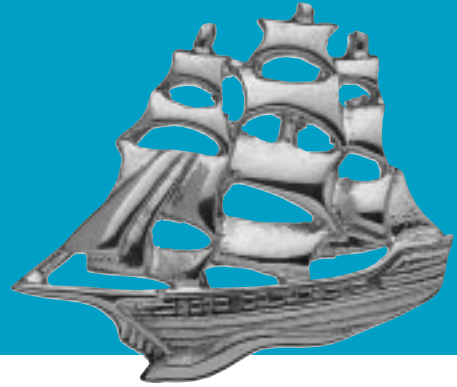
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A Brief History of the Cuff Link

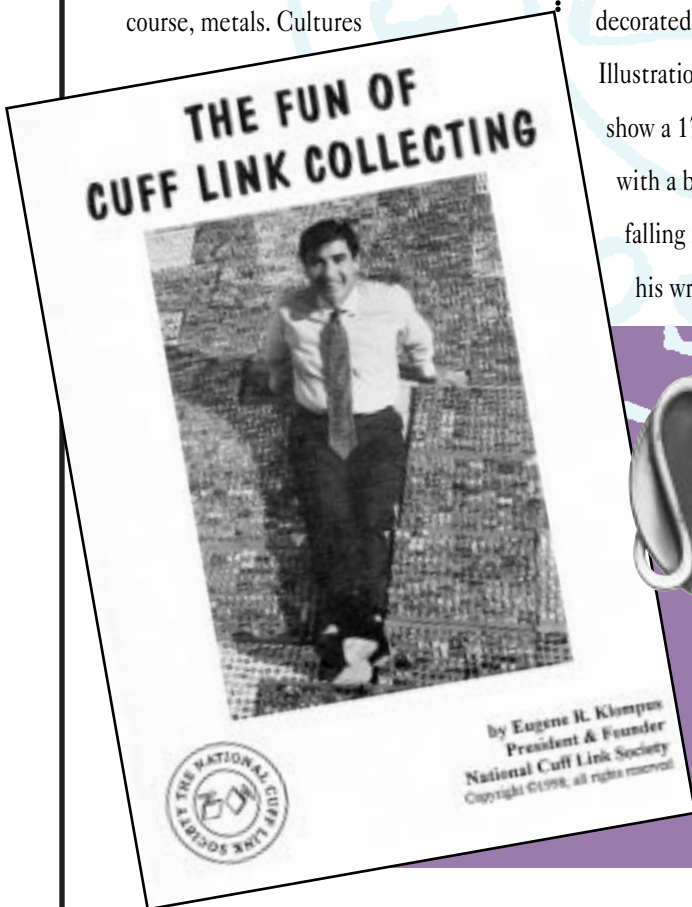


Gene Klompus, president and founder of the **National Cuff Link Society**, provided some history on the subject for us. “Since early times, man has needed to free his hands from his garment for working,” Gene explains. “And throughout the ages all sorts of materials have been used for this purpose — roots, twigs, bark, sinew, leather, string, cord, ribbon, and of course, metals. Cultures

living in colder climates needed to easily loosen their sleeves to protect their hands.” According to Gene, there is evidence of cuff fasteners in ancient hieroglyphics and in King Tut’s crypt. The introduction of the French cuff in the mid-1600s (a long sleeve that is folded back upon itself to create a double layer of fabric) moved the cuff link from the realm of practicality to personal adornment. Royalty wore decorated cuff fasteners or buttons. Illustrations in fashion history books show a 17th-century French Cavalier with a buttoned-back, high-split cuff falling in a large, graceful circle from his wrist. By the late 1700s early

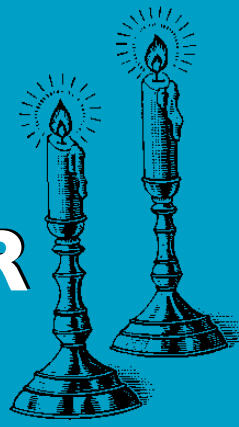
linkage appeared, and by the 1840s cuff links were usually in the form of gold, silver, or pearl buttons held together by metal, often brass chain. The 1920s were a period of great prevalence, followed by a long period of popularity from post World War II to the 70s. Gene notes that cuff link use mirrors economic health. His prediction: “We are heading into another good phase for cuff link wearers and collectors.”

For information on collecting cuff links, send for the following brochure: “The Fun of Cuff Link Collecting,” National Cuff Link Society, PO Box 5700, Vernon Hills, IL 60061, or call 847-816-0035. [W](#)



Cuff links such as these – copper coil (above left) and silver with checker board mother-of-pearl (above right) – can be found at The Cuff Link Museum, in Conway, New Hampshire (see page 2).

LACQUER



Lacquer is a clear coating often applied to brass or copper. Silver is seldom lacquered because lacquer yellows with age, and this discoloration is highly visible and unattractive on silver, while not as noticeable on other metals.

Metals are either lacquered or polished, the latter resulting in a superior surface patina or glow. Lacquered surfaces require little upkeep. Many people ask us how they can tell if their piece is lacquered. If you purchased the piece, check the manufacturer's care instructions. If the tag indicates that the piece is to be maintained by wiping with a damp cloth only (no polish), then it is lacquered. If the object in question is an antique or was acquired without instructions, see if the piece remains bright and shiny for a long time. If it does, most likely it is lacquered. If it darkens noticeably over a period of time, it is not lacquered and needs polishing.

Over time, lacquers break down and the underlying metal darkens. To restore the piece, you will have to remove the remaining lacquer. There are a number of different lacquers, so you may have to experiment to see what will remove your particular coating. Start with Wright's Brass Polish and try to polish off the lacquer. If this doesn't work, try boiling the piece in water, then polish with Wright's Brass Polish. Finally, try Wright's Brass Polish with a fine-grade steel wool. Be aware that the brass under the lacquer may be a thin plating over a base metal. Removing the lacquer may also remove the brass layer. **W**



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