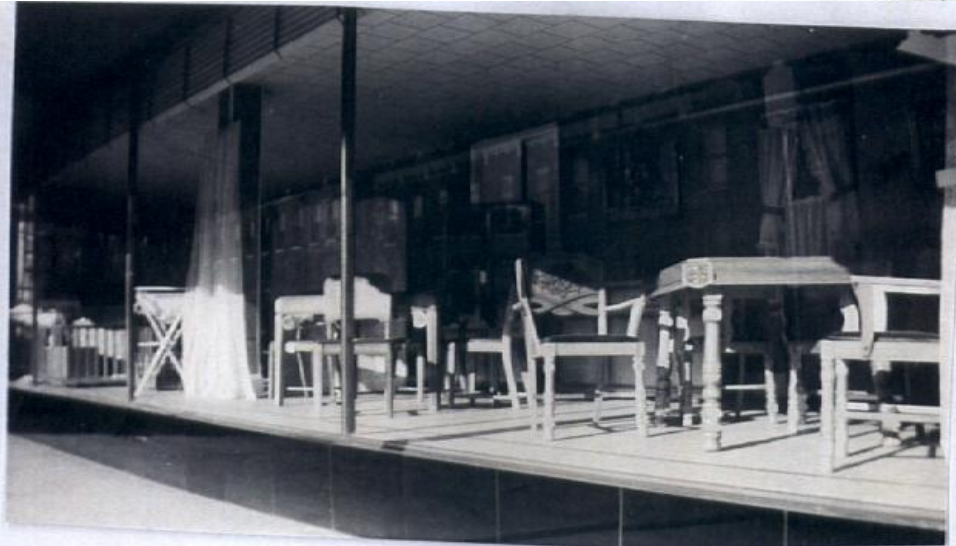
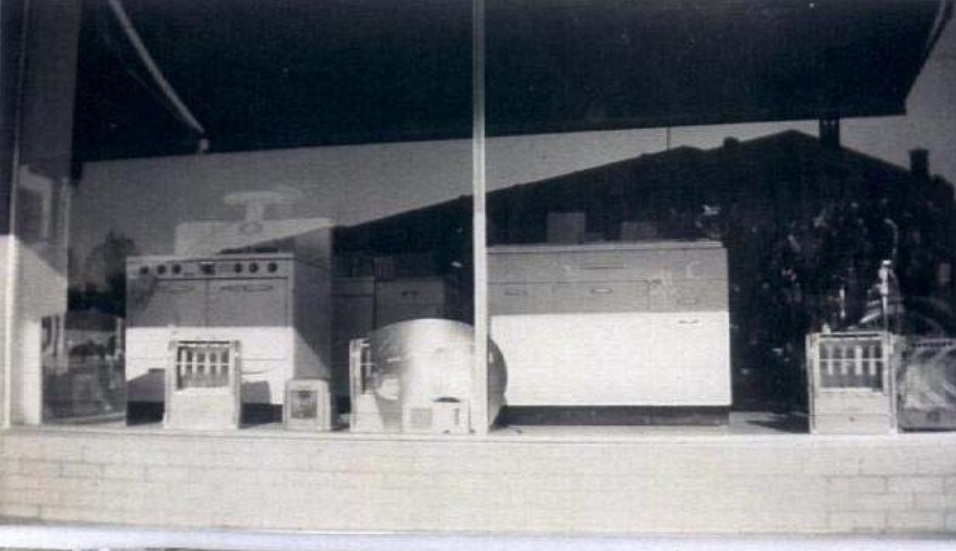


*Before riots Apr. 1968*









# Review of Gassinger's Store Year 1967

Our store was hit 37 times in 1967 including the 2 carry out shops a barber shop and a swap shop

8000<sup>00</sup> Worth of windows broken

On a cold snowy Sunday Nite in February 7500<sup>00</sup> worth of Colored Television were stolen windows smashed doors broken down - what a mess

Jerry Jt was held up as he was locking the front door. It was on a Saturday night. He was beaten and robbed of his salary and other monies -- his pants were ripped into shreds; he looked like a bum when he arrived home

The police department will not allow us to put in the window casings - Blee from Percolators

See P 2

Or a small radio in the window.  
all displays must be large items

Recently 3 pair of roller skates  
were stolen out of the window  
the window was smashed  
but cost for a new window 275.00

Practically every Sunday night  
about 2 A.M. Police called  
come down to the store and  
wood panel your windows  
which means about 3 hours  
work. boarding up the broken  
windows.

Very few whites live in the City  
every thing is taken over by  
the Blacks. we call them Dunkel  
or Schwartzes

No more white swimming pools  
or white play grounds.

They are coming in on every  
bus-train-planes & bicycles

During the rite when the phone  
rings after 11 PM - Means Trouble

When walking out on the sidewalk  
we all carry screw drivers -  
butcher knives and ice picks.

No more foot patrolmen: all  
ride in police cars.

When two or more negroes come  
into the store: one looks the  
other rooms around which  
means Trouble

I could go on and write for  
hours - what is the outcome  
is it getting worse - who knows  
the outcome is dark

The Sandman is coming &  
will close with a smile

Regards to everyone



Best of Health  
 Best of Wealth  
 and I hope you live long -  
 enough to enjoy both

Love Dad

PS Joe Unkel back our collector  
 was just held up and  
 robbed of 350<sup>00</sup> in collections  
 was he started to say he was.

Animals were broken of our cars  
 and trucks - The delivery trucks  
 take a beating - tools - tires and  
 furniture covers taken during  
 the rite

When a Colored man comes in we  
 are all alerted calling out # 10  
 which is a code signal for trouble

All of our desks are loaded with  
 a gun and live ammunition  
 besides rifles hidden in the  
 various corners -

SP5

People are scared they come out  
at night - especially the ladies

Recently they threw a Molotov  
cocktail bomb into Moses Rabus  
Lynn Store Bay & adjacent St  
the store was gutted out.

The Insurance Companies will  
not insure the windows after  
the Police expenses

Ziggy passed away - was sick  
with cancer for over one year

The Midway Gas Station across  
from us was held up and the  
operator was stabbed in the  
back - he layed in the hospital  
for 5 weeks - he recovered.

Every bar and cafe in our  
section was held up.

Good night Pleasant dreams

SF 6









my fathers diary of the ms to day by day. This had been a family business. His brother had a heart attack & died after viewing the disaster

Saturday Nite Apr 6-1968  
350 to 1

3 Days - 4 Nights  
Looting - Burning -

Sat Apr 6<sup>th</sup> At 10 PM our colored sales lady -  
Called the house I answered the phone  
Daisy May screamed your stores  
are broken into - about 350  
looters in the store - 15 police  
are across the street - they stood  
there did nothing -  
She begged me not to come  
to the store They will kill  
you ~~stay~~ home I have 2  
short wave police radio receivers  
I sat and listened to 2 AM  
Sunday - It was Horrible

Sun April 7 I arose at 6 AM woke up my  
son and went to the store  
The sight - No words can describe  
100 % of the contents were  
gone - It was an empty warehouse  
Remaining tables were broken  
Ceiling & wall fixtures torn  
off the ceiling and walls -  
nothing left  
all white goods - Refrigerators  
Washers Stoves Stereos were  
gone -  
This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> time



April 7- They hit - and looted whatever was left -

They did not overlook - the pens lighters and petty cash of course clothing was included

Monday Apr 8 - I arose 6 A.M. - left the house 7 A.M. - jumped in the Station Wagon went to the Sacks lumber Co on Hartford Road picked up what they had 10 pcs of 4x8 Plywood Panels and distd nails it was not enough - later picked up 20 more pcs - at various places - still not enough. Every looted store wanted Plywood

Tues Apr 9 - Clean up day - All tools were stolen - Elec ceiling lites pulled out of the ceiling - all flash lites taken also all electric lanterns - In our commissary all food and liquids were thrown on the floor and destroyed

Wed Apr 10th Clean up day - Tons of glass were removed by the Sanitation Dept

Wed Apr 10th - In our domestic department  
 every pillow case - sheets pillows  
 spreads - blankets - 100 bolts  
 of slip covers window shades  
 Venetian blinds furniture  
 polish, the salesmens desks  
 and wrapping paper  
 Rolls of Carpets - 25 asst'd  
 9x12 Carpet rugs.

Thurs Apr 11th - Curfew 7 to 7 - No food in  
 the neighborhood - No soft drinks  
 nothing - stores either burned or closed  
 about 12 Midday 5 City  
 trucks with 40 men  
 secured our windows with  
 4x8 - 5 ply panels -  
 We estimated it cost the City  
 500<sup>00</sup> for this work.

Fri April 12 - Good Friday -  
 Sat around - had meetings  
 planning for the future  
 Rioting for the time ended

Sat April 13 - Painted on the panels outside  
 "Open for business -"  
 We sold furniture from  
 photos & some photos were  
 5 yrs old - Business today was bad  
 Closed about 3 PM.  
 Question when will they hit again



Stores we own were all damaged

East Side	- 1701 N. Hwy	Confectionery
✓	1741 - -	Cleaners
✓	1743 - -	Carry Out

West Side	1726	Confectionery
✓	1728	Barber Shop
✓	1730	Private
✓	1746	Misc
✓	1752	Swap Shop -





#1

Many thanks for your Christmas presents  
cards etc

What a Year for us at the store  
1968 will always be an indelable mark  
in us

April 6<sup>th</sup> at 10 PM Saturday  
day before Palm Sunday there were  
350 Niggers looting our store -  
\$74000<sup>00</sup> in merchandise was stolen - 10,000<sup>00</sup>  
worth of windows broken -

12 policemen watching on  
the opposite corner - No law to stop  
the looters - 6 National Guardsmen  
on the other corner watching -  
No arrests.

Since the April 6<sup>th</sup> riot  
our store was robbed 6 times  
all at night - all break ins and entry  
all kinds of merchandise stolen -  
radios - electric appliances - TVs -  
stereos etc -

Dec 24<sup>th</sup> 2:30 PM  
temperature about 20° Wind 35 Mi per hr  
Niggers set fire to the steel hospital

#2

which was loaded with cartons, papers and trash. what a blaze and commotion  
What a mess - damages were small amt about \$200.00 we filed no claim for damages. other wise our insurance would be cancelled.

We now have 9 employees down from 30 -

Business has been above expectations - all our windows are boarded up - waiting for another riot -

The office is a Viking fort on the desks 9 of them all have rifles - 12 gauge shotguns - Pistols. Shark skins - and Mexican throw knives. We are called the Vikings.

When a suspicious nigger enters the store a Cow bell rings overhead the door - I call out #10 everyone goes to their battle station. If he is clean we lower the barrier.

Niggers are taking over the entire city -

Whites are moving out



#3

We will not allow more than 25<sup>00</sup>  
in the Cash drawer

No more checks cashed - Too dangerous  
to have money in the till.

All the boys and myself are in  
good health, My darling Clara  
is getting prettier and younger  
every day -

(We Close at 5 PM No more  
nite work too dangerous

All the whites carry guns  
when walking the streets - all the  
streets at night in the city are silent  
empty, and deserted.

No more church service  
at nite - 6 or 8 churches are closed  
in the negro ghettos.

What next - when will  
it stop - Your guess is as good as mine

Love from all of us

Dad -

*The News American, Fri. 10-29-71*

# Man about Town



By SEYMOUR KOPF

The black folks who mostly come into Gerard Gassinger's furniture store at 1752-66 North Gay Street call him Dynamo Jerry.



At a time when practically all the whites in the neighborhood moved out, Dynamo Jerry made his decision to stay put.

"Why are you staying in that neighborhood? To be killed?" a lot of his white and black friends said.

"I'm staying because the colored people like me here — and I like it here. They like how I do business," answered Dynamo Jerry as he spun the roulette

in his store. "I just love this wheel. After you buy something here you play the roulette. If you win back the rug you bought, you'll buy two more, won't you? So what do I lose?"

Dynamo Jerry is 78, and life is a lark with him. I spent one hilarious day in his large warehouse store in what some would call "no man's land". I heard him tell a customer so seriously: "My mother-in-law is 22 years younger than me and weighs 65 pounds." And minutes later he told another customer and me this yarn:

"ONE DAY I got lost in the woods just outside of Baltimore. I was dying of hunger. A wolf found me and dropped a worm in my mouth. This is how I began to learn frog language. Well, don't you look at me like that. At my age, would I tell a lie?"

The Gassinger name is well respected in Baltimore. Sons Lou and Gerald Jr. work with Dynamo Jerry as officers in the firm. One industrialist told me: "The trouble with those Gassingers is that they don't bend with the wind. They could have gone modern and moved to a fancy white neighborhood like most others did. They would have been the biggest in the business today."

But if they had—if the Gassingers were merely cold and dry businessmen concerned only with cash register figures — a lot would have been missing from Gay Street. Well, for example, the New Lebanon Calvary Church next door to the Gassinger store. The church was once a bowling alley—until Gassinger generosity intervened.

Pass by this church on a Sunday and you will hear some of the most beautiful singing in the city. The Rev. Joseph Stewart is pastor there. His church is a spiritual oasis to many of the forgotten poor.

OR TAKE those rummage sales held regularly in the stable of an old brewery on the side of the store. You can still see the individual windows the horses had. I saw Daisy Mae Edwards and Capt. Tom Saunders, two popular neighborhood residents, selling everything from cakes to chairs there. Different churches keep their booths there, and I suspect that a lot of the old furniture sold comes from Gassingers.

*The News American  
Fri. 10-29-71*

Gassinger cards always have something inspirational on them . . .

If you think you are beaten, you are;  
If you think that you dare not, you don't;  
If you'd like to win, but think you can't,  
It's almost certain you won't.  
If you think you'll lose, you're lost;  
For out in the world you'll find  
It's all in your state of mind!

Another card tells of six errors in life many people hold—including the "delusion that individual advancement is made by crushing down others." I quote two other errors: The failure to establish the habit of saving money, and the refusal to set aside trivial preferences in order to accomplish more important things.

HUNDREDS OF blacks have walked miles to his establishment just to look at a painting of Martin De Porres, "the Catholic Negro saint and patron of social justice". The Gassingers distribute a mimeographed story about him. There are also paintings of two Chinese saints. I was told: "Our saints are not for sale. We often have business meetings at this table below St. Martin. This guarantees that nobody tells a lie."

Jim Bishop wrote in his column the other day in this newspaper that mistrust and suspicion plagues employer-employee relations in America today. This is true. He rightly chided employers for their lengthy stupid questions asked on job application forms. But at Gassinger's it's like one big jolly family.

SAID PAT and Susan Brannon: "Working here with Dynamo Jerry is loads of fun. It's better than watching those comedy TV shows."

A lady spun the roulette and walked away with a pot and pan. I spun and walked away with an empty piggy bank. Meanwhile, I heard Dynamo Jerry telling a customer: "Do you know what happened to me last night? I got lost in my car in Catonsville and wound up in a forest. I was getting hungry and a wolf came up to me and put a worm in my mouth —and that's how I learned . . ."



# Gassinger Brothers, Inc.



*Furniture*

1766 NORTH GAY STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21213

TELEPHONE: 342-7300  
Area Code: (301)

Dear Customer:

Gassinger Brothers is going out of the furniture business at Gay Street and Patterson Park Avenue where we have operated for 52 years. We are forced to sell our building and want you to benefit by our misfortune.

Everything in our store and warehouse -- furniture -- bedding -- floor covering -- must be sold quickly so we're offering our entire stock at large discounts. If we don't have in stock what you want, we can still help you.

Our wholesaler friends, The Bagby Furniture Company, Exeter and Fleet Streets are cooperating with us in this effort to serve you by letting us send you to their 40,000 ft. display to buy on our account, what you want at a discount and let you pay cash for it right there. This letter will serve as an introduction at Bagby's.

Very truly yours,

GASSINGER BROTHERS, INC.

*Louis A. Gassinger*

Louis A. Gassinger

10/15/72

*Ethel Get your letter will write  
tomorrow. LOVE Lou*



I Remember...

# The Well-Top Icebox and 'the Weekend Rug'

*Low is a great thing here  
Row sat this together*

By GERARD P. GASSINGER

At this time of year, if you were in step with your neighbors, you'd have the winter window shades rolled up and put away, the screens up and the summer shades in place. You'd have the heavy winter rugs beaten clean and stored, and your floors covered with grass summer rugs to keep the house cool.

These chores completed, you had time in the cool of the evening to relax in the yard, comfortably seated on the settee or chairs of your cypress set, while you enjoyed the summer's first roses.

This was 50 years ago, when life moved at an even, easy pace in Baltimore.

Baltimoreans of my generation were the most methodical people in the world, with a right time to do everything. In the month of May you took down the white or ecru window shades. They were of the light color to admit all possible sunlight through the dull winter months. You then put up the dark blue shades to keep the intense summer sun from fading your furniture upholstery.

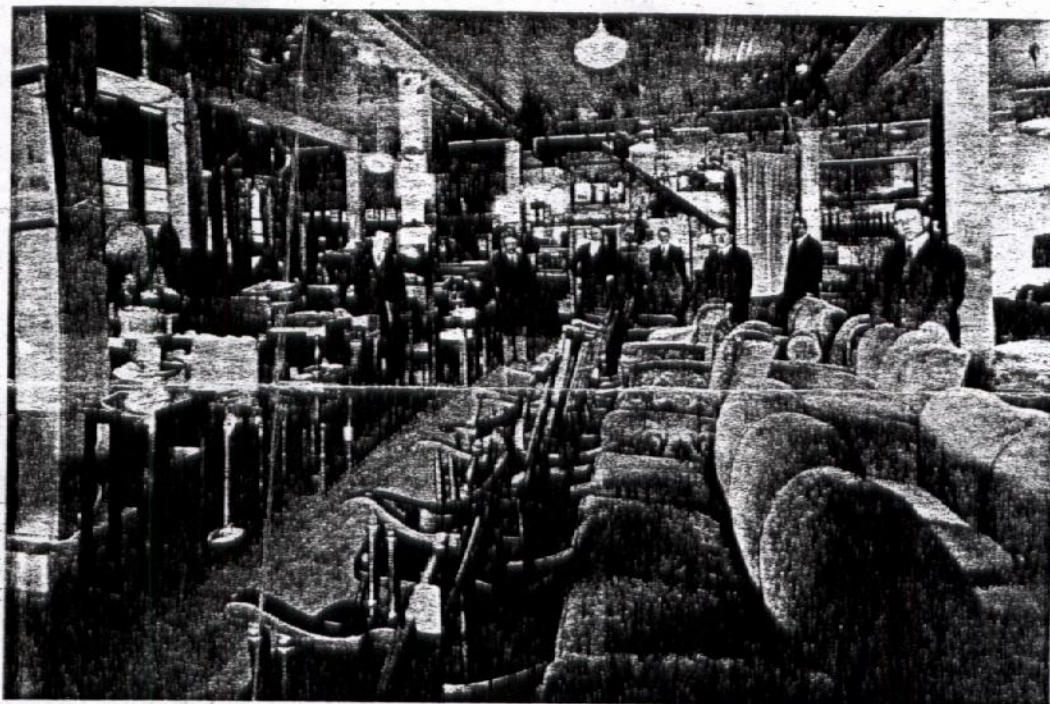
I never understood how the woven grass summer rugs made your house cooler, as they were supposed to, unless it was their psychological effect. But Baltimoreans (our family included) changed rugs and shades as regularly as the seasons, for the simple reason that our parents had done it that way.

The cypress set I mentioned was unpainted lawn furniture, a settee, table and two chairs. It was fashionable and a status symbol in the 1920's and 1930's. Our store sold hundreds of these sets. Probably parts of them are still in use around town, because cypress stands up to the weather indefinitely.

I KNEW the living styles of Baltimore well through our furniture store in the 1700 block North Gay street. It was an outgrowth of another family business. My father, August A. Gassinger, came from Bavaria with his brothers, August F. and Henry J. All were cabinetmakers, and they operated a table factory on Haven street. You'd pay a big price for one of those tables today because they've become popular again. They were the big round dining room models, made of quartered oak, with a thick center column supported by feet which were carved to resemble eagle claws.

The factory prospered for a few years, but then my father began to see better business possibilities in retailing furniture than in manufacturing it. He bought the North Gay street property—from 1754 to 1776—stocked it, and opened for business in 1921. Management was my father, his brothers, and various sons, cousins and in-laws. There were 65 employees, including 10 door-to-door salesmen.

As I mentioned, Baltimoreans of my



Mr. Gassinger, left, is on the extreme right in the 1921 photograph, above, in his family's furniture store. Note the overstuffed sofas upholstered in velour.

generation were methodical. When a couple got married and set up house-keeping, they proceeded in an unchanging pattern. They furnished the kitchen—coal or gas burning range, cabinet, table, chairs and an icebox. The well-top icebox was the best. With the door of the ice compartment opening from the top, it kept cold air trapped when the door was opened to drop in a block of ice. It was considered far more efficient than the box with the side-door opening, which allowed the cold air to escape when the door was opened.

The basic bedroom suite consisted of a double bed, dresser and two chairs. The living room suite was an over-

stuffed sofa, wing chair and straight chair. It sold for \$75.50. The bedroom suite cost very little more. The other day a customer who bought a bedroom suite from me 45 years ago told me he was still using it.

As they could afford it, families bought: rugs, shades, lawn furniture, lamps, pictures, radios and other extras until their home was furnished. So methodical were they in the order in which they accumulated their furnishings, you usually could tell by a couple's age just about what pieces of furniture they'd be buying.

CUSTOMERS came to our store and bought. In the picture, taken in 1921, you can see overstuffed sofas. They were upholstered with velour, in either deep blue or wine red. In the picture, left to right, are my uncle, Henry J.; my father, Andy Smith; two other salesmen whose names I can't recall; Frank J. Metz and, at the far right, me.

But we didn't depend on the walk-in trade. Our 10 door-to-door salesmen called on customers every week or two. Knocking at the door, they'd present the customer with a pin cushion, pot holder, can opener, yardstick or some free gift. They carried a file card with

each customer's account. They'd collect a dollar or two on the account, and show samples or catalogue illustrations of some new household item we were offering as a special.

In this way, collecting installments that amounted to a dollar or two, or sometimes as little as 50 cents, we furnished many hundreds of homes in the Baltimore area.

We had three classes of clients—poor people, working people, and the well-to-do, with a varied quality and price-range for each. If you wanted a rug, you picked out the best you could afford. If that was very little, you settled for linoleum, which most people referred to as "an oilcloth rug." That was an apt description, because linoleum in those days couldn't compare with the tough and lasting floor coverings on the market today. Among themselves, salesmen spoke of linoleum as "the weekend rug"—guaranteed to last you through Friday, Saturday and Sunday."

But most of our merchandise was top-grade. After 52 years, some of our early customers still come back to buy or to chat.

Now, as we prepare to close out and retire, these people will be the part of the business we'll miss most. □

THE SUN MAGAZINE, JUNE 10, 1973











