



Jenny's Spotlight

How I Became Forrest Gump

by Steve Weber

People often ask me, "How did you get this job?" My standard reply is genetic luck, a bad haircut and the idiot part comes natural. Of course I only say that to my fellow gumpers and would not think of saying that when I'm in character. To our guests, I reply "I'm the real Forrest Gump... I'm the one they made the movie about. The other man was just the actor. I'll tell you a secret about him, he only got the job because he looks like me. Turns out he was a fine actor."

So there you have it, the split personality of Steve Weber, err I mean Forrest Gump. The following is a list of frequently asked questions and the answers Steve Weber gives and the answers that Forrest Gump gives. My suggestion is to use the Weber answers for your own personal knowledge and use the Forrest Gump answers to discuss with guests of Bubba Gump.

Q: How did you get the job?

Weber: Like you, I applied. In March, 1996, I heard on the radio that Bubba Gump was opening in two weeks. I've been told for years that I looked like that actor and I played Forrest Gump for Halloween in 1994. I scheduled an appointment, arrived in costume and the rest is history.

Gump: I was sitting at home one day and out of the blue clear sky the phone rang. It was this man named Scott Barnett and he said, "Forrest, how'd you like to get back in the shrimpin' business?" So I said, "OK."

Q: Did they have a national contest to find you?

Weber: No, fortunately for me, Bubba Gump created the position when I showed up.

Gump: I'm Forrest Gump. I'm the real Forrest Gump.

Q: What is your normal schedule?

Weber: I work in San Francisco on Friday and Sunday afternoons. Saturday afternoon I work in Monterey. I visit the other restaurants during the grand openings (usually for 10 days to 2 weeks), and other special occasions.

Gump: I'm Forrest Gump, this is my restaurant. I like hanging out whenever I have the time, but normally I work in San Francisco on Friday and Sunday afternoons. Saturday afternoons I work in Monterey. I visit the other restaurants during the grand openings and for special occasions.

Q: What do you do during the week?

Weber: I've been Gumping for three years, during the first six months I continued to work full time as a sales representative. I continued working part-time at that same job for next year and half. Last year I remodeled a house.

Gump: I mow the lawn.

Q: What did you do before you became Forrest Gump?

Weber: I sat on the bench and nobody knew who I was. Actually, I was a sales representative for 10 years prior to 1996. I sold semiconductor capital equipment, custom men's clothing and office furniture. I've been independently employed since 1991.

Gump: I'm Forrest Gump. I'm the real Forrest Gump.

Q: Where do you live?

Weber: I live in Santa Clara (San Jose area). I'm 50 miles south of San Francisco and 75 miles north of Monterey. I commute daily.

Gump: Greenbow, Alabama.

Q: Have you ever met Tom Hanks?

Weber: Just recently. On February 4, 1999, I went to Los Angeles and auditioned as a photo double for Tom's future movie titled *The Cast Away*. I didn't get the job so Tom gained weight for the role and was about 25 pounds heavier than I am.

Gump: Do you mean the actor that they hired to play me for the movie?

Q: How much do you get paid?

Weber: I'm a gazillionaire and I do it for free... Just because it's fun!

Gump: I'm a gazillionaire and I do it for free... Just because it's fun!

Q: Is your job fun?

Weber: Lots of fun. I love meeting people so actually I have the perfect job. During the past three years I estimate that I've met and posed with over 1 million people... even an idiot knows that's a lot.

Gump: Keeping all these Bubba Gumps operating is a big job. Fortunately, there are lots of folks a lot smarter than me to do the cookin', seatin', servin', mahin' drinks, sellin' merchandise, findin' new locations, opening stores, hiring good Folks, designin' neat merchandise, payin' bills, hookin' up computers and keepin' them runnin', and other stuff that I'm not smart enough to know about.

Q: What is your favorite Bubba Gump location?

Weber: I started my career in Monterey and the Forrest Gump bench sits in a little park in front of the restaurant. My act works very well there. Saturdays are always busy so I always enjoy working in Monterey. San Francisco is the location I now spend most of my time (Fridays and Sundays). The bench is situated near the restaurant entrance so I'm able to see everybody come and go. I really enjoy the international crowd that visits Pier 39. Maui is great. The bench sits right on the street so people driving by in their cars get to join in the fun. I've noticed that everyone who visits Maui seems to be in a good mood. Also, there are lots of honeymooners. Chicago has a great location on the Navy Pier. Many of Chicago's guests live in Chicago or the suburbs. They visit Navy Pier as an escape from their regular daily lives so they are always in a playful mood. Great shrimpin' in Lake Michigan. Breckenridge was the opportunity to put Gump on chis. I froze my buttocks off but the town really welcomed me and I can't wait to visit again in the summer. Breckenridge has become a year round playground for folks of Colorado and the U.S. New Orleans is fantastic. I never visited New Orleans and the French Quarter prior to the opening of Bubba Gump. Lots of history condensed into the immediate area surrounding the restaurant. The building is historic and gump-like at the same time, also... it's big. They even have an elevator. Miami is a great Bubba Gump location. Lots to do when visiting the Miami area... South Beach, Coconut Grove, alligators and of course, Bayside Marketplace. Visiting Miami is like a box of chocolates, you never know... Hopefully from that answer you'll realize that there are not any Bubba Gump locations that I don't like... that's all I've got to say about that.

Gump: Whatever store I happen to be at that point in time... as long as they have a good supply of shrimp.

Q: What is your real name?

Weber: Steve Weber

Gump: Forrest, Forrest Gump.

Customer follow-up question: No really, what is your real name?

Gump: It doesn't matter. And that's all I've got to say about that.

Q: Are you crazy or just plain stupid?

Weber: Yes.

Gump: Stupid is, as stupid does.