

KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY AND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

Interview with Anne Barnes Bird
Interviewer is Susan Goldstein
May 20th, 2013

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Goldstein:in my home and the date is May 20th and I'm doing this on behalf of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association with partial funding from the Lexington Arts Council known as LexArts. Anne Bird, welcome to my home and to Lexington.

Bird: Thank you.

Goldstein: I know you're from Louisville and you work in Indiana. . .

Bird: Yep.

Goldstein: And I know that your family has a very long history of being in Kentucky, I also noted on the information you sent me which is something that has come down through the generations. So would you start from early on and maybe give us an overview of your family and why you've ended up doing the things you are doing?

Bird: Well, it's interesting because when you think early on, my grandmother, who encouraged my sister and myself to be interested and love textiles, along with our mother, Grandmother, when I started weaving said, "You don't need to make me a rug. I'm still using the one my sister made me". Well, considering Grandmother died a week shy of 98, that rug had been around a long time, you know, so, the handmade, the handcrafted, just, it was never homemade, it was handmade with pride and I think more than anything else that's something that our Grandmother and our mother instilled in us...that there was a pride in creating, you know, just...

Goldstein: And are you saying those words, 'Handmade' and 'Homemade', that there's a distinction?

Bird: So many people look at homemade as, by hand, that carries more power, you know, there's thought to it. It's not just that you had to make do. Now, let's face it, a rag rug, you are lucky to have all those wonderful fibers and fabrics that, you know, have been in your family or been in your household or it's somebody's blue jeans and the stories my Grandmother could tell by saying, "Oh, this bit of color was such and such and that bit of color was such and such" and she also put in a touch of black, because as the colors faded, then there was still a touch of charcoal and so you look at the rag rugs, and I have one of them, that it is charcoal and all those pastels continue to be alive because of the touch of black, which is now the charcoal. . .

Goldstein: Do you mean the contrast?

Bird: The contrast, yes. Now, you know, Grandmother was never one to say no, nor were our parents, in turn it was. . .[phone ringing] go ahead and try it. Ask.

Goldstein: Hold on, let me get rid of the phone.

Bird: Okay.

[phone ringing]

Bird:Talking colors, talking fibers. In talking fibers and talking colors. It was how colors and fibers went together, you know, if you're making a rag rug make sure it's all cut on the straight or all cut on the bias, you know, little words of wisdom, that when you get into weaving that mean a lot on what's going to happen, will the rug lay flat or whatever. Now, my push to join the Kentucky Guild came from a gal by the name of Francey Dolbear and Francey was my mentor at the University of Louisville. . .

Goldstein: And how old were you then?

Bird: 19? 18, 19.

Goldstein: And were you in college at the time?

Bird: Yes. Freshman in college, met Francey, met Julia Duncan, who was a potter and both those women were very strong dynamic women and very encouraging on moving forward, even though I was a double major, Biology and Art, looking at the art, then this is what you need to do. Because they could see more into me than I was seeing in myself at that point in time, you know, macramé was popular, you know, just, I just enjoyed working with my hands.

Goldstein: Sure

Bird: And so, and applying to the Kentucky Guild, it was hinted that, you know, you're normally turned down three times, well I was turned down three times. I didn't have sheep. The city of Louisville really takes a dim view of you having sheep in your back yard.

[Laughter, Goldstein]

Bird: I think my brother-in-law would be too, because I was living with my sister and brother-in-law, and so I kept plugging away. They said go at it again.

Goldstein: So they insisted you have your own sheep?

Bird: It was inferred that you needed to do the whole process, kind of a sheep to shawl, you know you have your sheep, shear your sheep, spin your wool, make your product. . .

Goldstein: Right.

Bird: And the third time when I was accepted, you know I said, "Guys, not everybody can have sheep. . ."

Goldstein: Uh huh.

Bird: And so, I turned up with a different batch of individuals for the jurying and I was accepted and so then I started doing the Guild shows and it was interested because at this point in time, I was moving from being a student into where did I really want to go with my life and I found that it was education. And in turn, I became involved in jurying and so that I was part of the process. . .

Goldstein: You mean jurying the Guild.

Bird: The Guild jurying, right. And so, you know, being on the other side of the coin, not being the person trying to get into the Guild, but an exhibiting artist craftsman and then volunteering

my time to be a part of the jurying process, you know, which was just unbelievable undertaking, you know all the items coming in and that we would be looking at them.

Goldstein: What was your full time focus at that point, was it to be an artist? Or where did the teaching come into it? Were the two years where you were just a craftsperson ()

Bird: I was a craftsperson that ran a craft shop and I was hired away from my shop to be a full time art teacher.

Goldstein: And the shop, was that related to the Guild?

Bird: No, my shop was just relating to teaching textiles and it was a gift shop and a craft shop teaching macramé and spinning and weaving. And so, in turn, I was crossing that line, you know, it's like which camp do you want your foot in, are you the artist or are you the teacher? And for me, I recognized, I needed both. I wanted to teach other individuals the textiles, because that's my love. I love it. You know, I teach high school art and I teach ceramics, I teach jewelry making, I teach all of these other areas, but my love is textiles.

Goldstein: Now did you continue to do the fairs?

Bird: I continued up through 1985 and that's when my son was born, and then I became president of the Guild and you can't do everything and I found that if I was a craftsperson with a tent at the show and the president, I was never in my tent because the president is the one who is out walking around and making sure everything goes smoothly.

Goldstein: Was there a director at the time?

Bird: There was a director at the time and, you know. . .

Goldstein: So there was a professional staff. . .

Bird: Yes, there was a professional staff.

Goldstein: ()

Bird: No and it was a case of that, oh just like any other organization, people need to communicate. You know, if you have a problem with a person in the booth next to you, talk to them. You know. To say the least, if you're at Indian Fort, you really don't want the person lighting up a cigarette, because it scares me to death, you're in the woods. You know, let's.....And you know, although it seems like simple things, it's getting along with people and working together.

Goldstein: Were those...When you think back, kind of, very, positive years?

Bird: Oh, they were fantastic years. . .

Goldstein: ...where there was growth. . .

Bird: We would have so many. . .

Goldstein: Excitement. . .

Bird: Oh, we would have so many people that it was exciting. The number of artists that were there, but also the crowds that would come. And they would have school children come on Fridays and they all would have questions, you know, sheets of paper with questions by their teachers. It was just so neat, because, you know, they would tour the show, so to speak, first. Then they would decide what was that artist or what area of art were they the most interested in, then they would come by and they would interview. Now, we helped encourage this with the teachers. Let's make the reason that you're bringing these kids not just a day off from school, but a learning situation and so it was fun because, you know, you'd look up and here would be another student that was one of the students that had already been there but they would have drug a friend over and those of us that demonstrated, I'm one of those people that I've got to be doing something. I don't do nothing well, I've got to have my hands busy. In turn, everyone demonstrated had kids, adults around you, because you know, they wanted to see the process. And it's all about education and the process. And from time to time, I would look up and there'd be a student of mine from Indiana, which was really a surprise. But I would talk to my kids in Indiana and explain where I was going, so that they knew. So, when you start thinking about it, the children, adults, everybody that was coming, was not just a Kentucky group of people, but it could be, it was Southern Indiana, it was Michigan, it was Ohio. The number of people that would come to see.

Goldstein: So, the exposure, the introduction to the art. . .

Bird: Right.

Goldstein: Was a very. .

Bird: It was dynamic. . .

Goldstein: Positive.

Bird: It was so positive. Then groups from Berea did the country dancing. You know, that was a tricky one, because you wanted to have the music and you wanted to also open up this other venue. But the trick was always, it was in front of somebody's booth, people couldn't get there. And then that was once again, the role of the onsite individuals to say, "If you shift over just a little bit it's a win-win for both of us." And, you know, just being out in nature. It was just the calm, you weren't hearing horns honking, you weren't hearing, you know, people screaming, you were hearing talking and laughing and you know, kids running to show parents different things that they had spotted and whether it was a wooden train or you know, something special that someone had made, you know, just. . .

Goldstein: Right.

Bird: It was exciting.

Goldstein: Now, I know in the old days, and the Guild started, I believe, in the early 60s. The first fair, I believe was in '67. But, initially, artists used to camp out. . .

Bird: I did. . .

Goldstein: On the fairgrounds.

Bird: Yea.

Goldstein: And there was quite a bonding and fun experience.

Bird: Yes, oh yea, because you camped behind your tent, you know, and so then there would....yea, you'd camp right behind your tent, so my first. . .

Goldstein: So you actually did that.

Bird: Oh, I did that. Yea. . .

Goldstein: That sounds like a wonderful experience. . .

Bird: Oh, it was wonderful. Yes, so you would camp behind your tent and there would be campfires at night and it was kind of like a grown up camp, I mean you know, going to camp and it was a great experience, because everyone found they really had more things in common, then not in common. You know, and when you throw that many people together, you know, okay it's a woodworker next to me, it's a metal worker on the other side, it's a jeweler and you start looking around what do you have in common, well, when you're sitting around a campfire you're talking and you're sharing, and so many roads craftsmen and artists have taken, it might have been the same road or it might have been a little bit different. And as a mom or a little kid, how I wished that I could have done my craft all the time, but realistic for me, that wasn't in the cards, but I've never stopped and that was a hard thing for some people to recognize that were full-time artists and craftsmen, because they were like, you're not doing it full-time, but you know, some of us do need to teach and so my role is to still be a craftsperson, but I enjoy teaching what I know and sharing.

Goldstein: Now, during those Guild years, was, did you feel that there was any evolution in the Guild, any ups or downs

Bird: Oh.

Goldstein: Or things were good and just stable.

Bird: We had, kind of the thread that runs through the middle, and we did have the ups and downs. What seems to happen is in all organizations, you have a core of individuals and they start to wear out. And so Michael Zoeller, who was the president before myself, a potter, did beautiful work and Michael was quiet and the fact that, you know, he just soft-spoken man and so many times people would be so upset and it, with a potter, you can open your kiln and you can have everything broken or everything's wonderful. And some of these people would be so upset, you know. They would come and they wouldn't have much merchandise and Michael really led the way of saying, Okay, let's take some of Bird's weaving and let's put it with your pottery, since you know, it broke. And you suddenly start lending and collaborating and you know, Michael really helped lead the way on let's look at the this, because you and I have seen a booth that if we could get in there and rearrange a little bit. . .

Goldstein: To design.

Bird: To design, yes, so we started talking about design.

Goldstein: Oh, interesting.

Bird: And so many individuals looked, well you know pottery, but I do such and such, but we all know design is design and we can share ideas. And so this was something that we worked on. You know, just sharing. . .

Goldstein: Did you have workshops?

Bird: We had workshops. Also, we had workshops on the fact that you need to figure out what is your mug, so to speak, because we all needed something that was that tried and true, that you knew would sell for X dollars. That you could count on. You know, some individuals, that each time we saw whatever their craft was, it was all over the place and for individuals coming back they would be looking for. I mean, as a weaver. . .

Goldstein: So you're looking at the business side. . .

Bird: Then we looked at the business aspect. What could we do to help our artists and craftsmen and so, you know, it was, what is that mug and, you know, people used to go but, I'm not a potter. Well, okay, mine is, what is my weaving, what is my scarf, what is it that I can have as my tried and true and then I can expand, you know, and shift in other areas, you know and some people, it was just colors. You know, I know weavers today that love to work in the neutral tones. The neutral tones are awesome. There's just so many shades in there. But they need a little bit of contrast. Okay, so make the contrast in the booth, so those neutrals pop. But just, you know, looking in a different way at what you're already doing, because we had the craftsmanship we just needed to appeal to the public.

Goldstein: Now, by the time I became involved in the Guild, what you're defining, these workshops and programs to educate and assist artists seemed to be coming from the Craft Marketing Program.

Bird: It shifted.

Goldstein: So there was a time....Can you talk about that? How did that...how and why did that come about?

Bird: We looked at it and we talked about it in the past and the interview with you brought up a lot of memories and there were so many areas, and let's be realistic, one group can't do everything, so there were so many areas of doing a little bit that when Kentucky Craft Marketing started doing these things, I think people went, (), that's what we've been doing, well, why not let them do it? Because they were doing it with an equal playing field and trying to touch many different craftsmen. Where you as a Guild were trying to do it, so many people say, oh but, you know, they're a jeweler or they're a such and such. Not seeing a point that, whether you're trained as a jeweler or you're trained as a woodworker or whatever your training is, you still have knowledge, whether it's business sense or whether it's design sense on putting a booth together and so with, you know, Kentucky Crafting changing, they also had the funds, they could bring these people in. You know, let them use their funds to bring this....And also, it really broadened the availability of many things. Now, they would bring textile people and I would go and I would sit there and it breaks people say, can you tell me what they were talking about? Because, we talk a common thread of a language here in Kentucky, but if you're bringing somebody from Nantucket, they're saying things in different ways. . .

Goldstein: You have your own vocabulary. . .

Bird: You have your own vocabulary, and so it was interesting and humorous because, is that not what education is all about, different words for the same thing.

Goldstein: Did this change allow the Guild to the focus on something else?

Bird: It took pressure off the Guild and in turn, when I stopped being active as the president and it wasn't that I threw up on hands and said I'm no longer going to be active as the president, but I became a single parent, so my focus couldn't be, once a month leaving town or spending the amount of time involved that I had been. When you've got a support at home, it's easier to do and so when I, so to speak, faded away, because I'd been secretary, I'd been really involved, and you know, prior to being president, that I felt good about turning it over to Tucker, because I knew Tucker. Tucker Thomas. And so, we'd all been to these meetings, we joked about the amount of time we spent together, you know, on Saturdays. And you know, I felt good about the hands that I was turning it over, you know, because I have ownership, you know, when I say I'm a member, a juried member of the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, that holds weight and so in turn, turning it over to another individual who had invested time and energy in the Kentucky Guild, I felt okay about it.

Goldstein: So, if the educational component shifted to the state government. Do you feel the focus was on..... What was the focus on other than the fair?

Bird: Alright, we still had classes, you know, there were still classes going on. Came down to Berea and took felting, you know, so there were still small classes going on and you know, we just didn't say okay, here you go, but we recognized that we needed strength, you know, to get a stronger, as individuals. We realized that that craftspeople needed insurance. We had some devastating things happen to artists and craftsmen and people chipped in, you know, whether it was the. . .

Goldstein: A relief fund. . .

Bird: Yea, a relief fund, you know. Someone having a new baby and the child was sick, you know. A fire in somebody's kiln, I mean, you know. . .

Goldstein: So it was really a community of artists. . .

Bird: Right, and we were all over the state and the board did not just meet in one spot, it, where ever a person was, we went there, so.

Goldstein: You shifted.

Bird: We shifted. You know, it wasn't the same place, you know two meetings in a row and this in turn, was also good because craftspeople could see, you know, it's not a Louisville base, it's not a Frankfort base, it's not a Berea base. This is Kentucky based.

Goldstein: So, was the, did the Guild have an outlet/store at that time and I know they did at one point in Lexington.

Bird: Yes, they did.

Goldstein: Did you feel that was an asset?

Bird: Oh, I think it was an asset. I mean, we're talking, you know 70s, and that was an asset. Also there was a shop in Louisville called Coffee Trees and they tried to get Kentucky Craftsmen to have their work in there, which was also an asset.

Goldstein: I wasn't aware of that.

Bird: Yea, it was in Stewart Dry Goods. Of course, Stewart Dry Goods is long gone and then they were a stand-alone shop on 6th and Walnut, I believe and so there were individuals throughout the state that wanted, early on, Kentucky Crafted. It wasn't called Kentucky Crafted, but you know, artisans from the Kentucky Guild.

Goldstein: And this was while you were president. What existed, outside of Berea?

Bird: Outside of Berea, we had a shop in Lexington and then Coffee Trees in Louisville and there were some other shops that wanted, you know, handcrafts by Kentucky Guild artisans.

Goldstein: Why do you feel that that was dissolved at some point?

Bird: That's a good question.

Goldstein: And has it been taken over by Craft Marketing? Or have they taken that in another direction? I mean their gift shops are really in state parks, correct?

Bird: Right, you know, and state parks are hard. I tried to go that route, but you've got thirty, sixty days before you get paid. You know? I mean, so, as a craftsperson that's a long time to wait for the funds to come in.

Goldstein: So what happened to these satellite stores?

Bird: I think, once again, that the age of those of us that were birddogging, we got older and life got in the way and I mean it's funny how life does get in the way, because, you know, I look back on making a trek to the Lexington store to take weavings and you know, because I sold, you know, and yet life got in the way and my life shifted and others lives shifted and in turn, individuals making decisions and I wasn't there for those decisions. Not quite sure on what the foundation on some of them were. They looked at, seriously at marketing, okay, are we making the sales? Is this the right location? Has the neighborhood changed where the shop was? And I think they were looking at all of these pictures. Coffee Trees' in Louisville. You know, first it was in Stewart Dry Goods, and then it was stand alone and then they went out of business and that was because where they were located, it shifted. Now, it's coming back, but when we look at all the neighborhoods where shops have been shops now or not. You know, they have you know, kind of faded away. And so, I think it's time, you know. And once again, we're on this roller coaster of time and what was new in the 70s, it's coming back and its fun. I look at it as fun, because here's a generation of individuals that have not seen this and you know, it's that experience all over again. And this is part of growing in education.

Goldstein: So the, obviously, just looking at the bottom line, the income was very important in making decisions, but you mentioned something else, and you mentioned the fact that those who were defined as dedicated and hardworking volunteers and were leaders for one reason or the other, headed in another direction. Okay, and I seemed to, I question whether there's a pattern with all organizations in that people age and it's very difficult to replace oneself with a

younger generation. Okay, particularly in our current times. I noticed when I was going to fairs, before I kind of resigned from doing fairs myself a few years ago, everyone was approaching 60 years old. And they were all getting to the stage where they were physically and mentally had had enough. . .

Bird: Oh, yea. Worn out. Yea, yea.

Goldstein: We're worn out. But there wasn't a substantial population of people in their 30s or 40s to step in.

Bird: Right. And I look at...I had mentors and yet, I'm willing to be a mentor and I'm hoping that I've got a couple of students. . .

Goldstein: Has it become more challenging to find those students?

Bird: Oh, oh, oh, it is very challenging to them. But something, as you told back to me what I was sharing with you, also more and more people now have someone representing them in a gallery and so in some ways they didn't need the Guild shop. That was the only place I had work.

Goldstein: Right. And we also have online.

Bird: And we have online. So the whole world has shifted on us. So you know, I could be selling online. Now, for me, online, I you know, I'm advertising that I teach, because that's, I am the teacher. I am a teacher. And when somebody says this is my teacher. Boy, that is the ultimate for pride for me, that that's the way they look at me and I'm a craftsman also, but to know that I have instilled my love and my knowledge in them so they can go on, boy it is well worth it. But, you know, I look at so many, you know, an example.....St. James Court Art Show. I was in on jurying on Saturday morning and. . .

Goldstein: Assisting with the jurying?

Bird: Assisting with the jurying for one section. There's seven sections and I was assisting on one section and so we were looking at artwork and this is where what was new in the seventies is coming back and they said, Oh that was in the seventies and I said but look at the generations that haven't seen this. You know, we've got to think about the fact that it didn't stop with us. We have new generations coming up and I find this exciting, that they are going through the same patterns that all the rest of us. . .

Goldstein: The pendulum does swing.

Bird: Yes, the pendulum does swing. And a hard thing that the Kentucky Guild had, when I was involved in the jury process, was they would say, Oh I don't think that they'll do very well. You know what? It's not my choice, it's not your choice if they're going to sell well or not. The fact is, if they are craftsmen and they've got an unbelievable quality of work then what we need to help them understand is, you have got to have a volume of work in your booth, not just a few things. Because if its a few things, it looks like you're not serious, if you have volume in your booth, it shows. That you have made a serious investment in yourself as an artist, and for others to have a choice from. And so, here I am, I'm educating a jury committee on we can't make the decision on whether they'll be able to sell or not. But the decision is on the quality of the work. You know,

and so you know, I thought, well, okay, but, they looked, they listened, and they thought about it and we had good discussion and we moved on. . .

Goldstein: Wonderful, so you worked as a team.

Bird: Working as a team. And so, that was a hard shift on those people that had applied three times before you get in, you know, and that was where the shift went when I was involved. Education. You've got to educate and communicate.

Goldstein: How does your science background play into this? Or doesn't it?

Bird: Oh, it does. The reality of it is that daddy would only pay for college education for Math or Science and I didn't want to go to Speed school, because he had taught at Speed school. And science really plays into because of color, in dyeing. When you're spinning fibers, you're talking physics, when you're threading a tapestry needle and you put the yarn on top of the needle and you push the needle away and pull on it and pinch. You don't have to lick that yarn or fiber, you can slide it down, you're talking, you know, pressure. And I talk this way all the time, and the kids at school look at me like, oh wow. But they understand and I will then hear my students talking science elsewhere, because we're looking at color, we're looking at the spectrum. You know, I'll have students look through a glass of water so it'll distort what they're doing.

Goldstein: So it sounds to me like you're analyzing.

Bird: Oh, yes. Problem solving, yes.

Goldstein: Analyzing, because you have that ability from your background and that must make thing much more interesting.

Bird: Oh, it does, yes. And let's face it art's in the middle of the wheel and it makes everything else make sense.

Goldstein: So, you mentioned that you were working in a gift shop in Louisville, this was after you were president of the Guild?

Bird: Prior to.

Goldstein: Prior to.

Bird: Yea, right, I didn't go immediately into teaching, had a gift shop.

Goldstein: And then you became very involved in the Guild.

Bird: Very.

Goldstein: Were you....So where does your teaching start in there []?

Bird: Okay I was a teacher, okay I started teaching in 1975, so had been juried and exhibiting craftsperson for five years, went into education, continued being a....going to the fairs. Alright, worked at, you know, teaching school, being secretary of the Guild, then moved on into the president. And in the meantime, had gotten married, had a child, just.... And have continued to,

you know, I'm looking at, you know, my world is changing, so where I teach now, we have two weeks in the fall, so I may be able to go back and be doing a Guild show, where I hadn't before. Because there is only x amount of time your principal really likes for you to take off from school. And you can't do that to kids, I mean, I'm a believer in consistency.

Goldstein: So, you teach quite a diversity of ages.

Bird: Oh, yea. I teach high school, but I teach a diversity of abilities and to say the least, in art, everyone can be successful.

Goldstein: And how long have you been teaching in your current job?

Bird: Okay, 31 years. I'm the senior faculty member of the corporation and I am a mentor. I've been trained by the state of Indiana so I can evaluate teachers to a rubric and on top of that I'm the education association president.

Goldstein: So you, yourself, have some extracurricular. . .

Bird: Yea, I have one or two, yea.

[Laughter, Bird]

Bird: And on top of that, I create. That's what keeps me on an even keel.

Goldstein: How do you find time to create?

Bird: About 9 to 2am. And that's not every night. It's just, I will hit a point where I have to create. I just have to. And. . .

Goldstein: You must be a lot younger than me, because. . .

Bird: Oh, no. . .

Goldstein: I used to do that, but

Bird: Well, no, I mean.....prom caught up with me. I've decided that, it's, you know, when you, it was too loud of music. My husband took a decibel reading and it was over 100 and it was.... so I stood outside. I played doorkeeper. Just because, you know, it was too loud.

Goldstein: Right.

Bird: And I recognize I need it down a bit, but they joke because I seem to be able to hear all conversations and comment on what kids say and they go, well don't listen, and I go, you don't need to talk about it, you know. But, my students know I care about them and will push them to be successful. Final today, the choice is you can make a C by doing this, you can make a B, by doing this, you can make an A, by doing this. And a kid said there's no F or D? And I said, that's not a choice, because the choice is to be successful. So, I push them.

Goldstein: Do you have any particular activities that you enjoy the most ()?

Bird: I love teaching the kids how to weave. We make cardboard looms, but also everything from coil baskets to, I've got them weaving in jewelry. My jewelry class, the final project is a Byzantine chain. And so, they are totally focused. You can walk in on my jewelry class and it is quiet, because they can't focus and talk at the same time, when it comes to manipulating. Students have said, "Can we weave in metal?" And I said, "it's up to your imagination." So unbelievable, you know, they're taking what I've done in yarn and moving it on into metal and it's just so exciting, because there's so many metals that have colors to them now, that it really is just so neat. My corporation has an art show that runs for a week, every year and we have individuals, so to speak, outsiders, come in to look at the artwork because it's K through twelve, so that this corporation has made an investment in the arts.

Goldstein: Now what about the ratio of boys and girls? Is there a trend? Is there. . .

Bird: For me, I pretty much have more guys than gals and it's interesting. But I point out, if its textile class in Europe, it's the men who are doing the designing. And with that sort of an attitude, they accept it and we just do it and you know, it's just, it's really interesting. I've got fellows that are making gigantic coiled baskets and the challenge that they have put on to each other, I didn't expect this of them, but they have challenged each other. And they have to plan ahead of time, so it's not just winging it. They have had to put this on paper and you know, I look at baskets I've done and I've got a piece of stitchery on the wall that I did as a ninth grader and they go, You did that? And I went, "Yea", same, you know, same initial, you know before I was married. And they go, "Why didn't you do more?" I wasn't pushed to do more. That was all I was pushed to do, or I don't know if I was pushed at all. But in turn, I'm lucky enough, I have a piece of artwork from when I was in the ninth grade. And at the time pink and orange didn't set my world on fire, but I've grown to love it, you know. [Laughter, Bird], just, so it's the challenge and how you approach it. That's what it's all about.

Goldstein: So if the challenge is to motivate and excite the child to bring the artist to the forefront, and do....What do you think many of these students are doing in ten years?

Bird: Oh, I've got one student, whatever he does, it won't surprise me, I've never had a kid like this. When he started high school, he couldn't read and he passed the end of course assessments in English and in Math. Saturday night he was crowned king of the prom because the whole class is so proud of him. He's the only student I've ever had who could be an AP art student. His problem is, he can't read well enough to be in the program, but yet if you need a costume made, if you need a mask made, if you need an Easter Island head made, he can dream it up and do it and he's got sketchbook after sketchbook, because he understands a thumbnail sketch to put that together and what is he going. . .

Goldstein: Design

Bird: Oh my gosh, the design. Just amazing. He took dual credit, high school art, after school, with me, knowing he could not get college credit, but he did it because of the education. You don't run into many kids like that. The rest of them were taking it for dual credits, so they didn't have to pay three hours of college credit. He wanted the art. And, I had a student going blind in that class, she's the valedictorian of the class and she'd never taken art. But she found that in making a coiled basket then a gross point needlepoint, here was an area that she could feel her way through. And she said, "Did you know colors feel different?" Well, I, from time to time have known they've felt, you know, some feel more harsh in textiles, some might feel more harsh than others, but she, it's blurry to her. But she said, "When I'm working they feel different." I look at

the fact that she has been given a gift of lifelong knowledge that she can use and she knows that she can feel the difference. And her design element was fantastic. Just amazing young woman.

Goldstein: So when you say, or when she says feel the difference, she speaking on an emotional level. . .

Bird: But also, they feel different.

Goldstein: Visceral.

Bird: Yea, actually feel different. Now, a little bit I can feel a difference in red, but the other colors feel the same to me. But her touch is so light, because she reads braille, that she said "no, they feel different." You except that.

Goldstein: Yes. How fascinating.

Bird: And so, in turn, you know, from moving from a coil basket to a gross point needlepoint and then she wanted to know, do they make it smaller, because she was challenging herself. So here, I was fortunate enough to have two students, [dogs barking] opposite ends of the spectrum, both of them taking the art for the love. Hooked them. Hooked them big-time.

Goldstein: Fascinating. I wanted to ask you, as someone whose reached your level of expertise and obviously you're a supervisor, teacher, what do you see happening with art education in Kentucky? And art education through organizations, I mean, both big topics.

Bird: To say the least, when I'm Kentucky, I mean I work in Indiana, but. . .

Goldstein: Is it similar, by the way?

Bird: It's very similar, yea I think it very similar.

Goldstein: It's regional.

Bird: It's regional, because I'm talking to Kentucky artists. I think we're seeing what you've already pointed out, that we've got a gap between those of us that have reached a certain age and the individuals coming up. I would hope that we could help that middle ground group of individuals. I'm not quite sure how other than continuing to have workshops even if one or two individuals show, I mean, we, you know, you start with one and then it grows.

Goldstein: So the organizations could continue to provide this?

Bird: Right. So many of us. All of us, whatever our age is, we all are calendar oriented and so if organizations, and I'm not putting my finger on anybody in particular, if the organizations could plan a little bit farther in ahead so if you're a teacher and it's happening during the school year, you knew far enough in advance that you could put in for professional development. Everything helps your kids in the classroom and so, in turn, I've been fortunate enough that my school corporation when I've gone to them, I've said, "I'm going to go to this, whether you want to pay for it or not" [Laughter, Bird], because that's the sort of person I am and pretty much every time. They have said, "We'll pay your fee. If there's a fee, we will pay it, because we know you bring it back to your students" and this is where planning ahead and really having a game plan so that

young people, whether they're teachers or they're working some other job or whatever, could be able to plan ahead to take classes and workshops and I think that this would be of help. I hear English department, I hear Math department going, Oh, wow, I wish I had heard about this sooner, so we could have put in for being off. And, you know, with all the rules and regulations, if you are a teacher that you've got to go through, you have to have the time so that the right people can be asked and then you have approval and so on and so forth. Now, individuals who are on their own and working. Alright, I know a couple of gals that have small shops, they need time so they can find someone who can cover for them, as opposed to closing the door and saying I'm going to workshop. And it takes time to work it out, or swap or do a time sharing or whatever, you know, with another individual, and so it falls into thinking a bit ahead. I mean, I've already got fourteen and fifteen, 2014 and 15 items on my calendar. And we joke about this, but when something reoccurs every year, you go ahead and put it on your calendar, alright, the fall fair, you put it on the calendar, all of these things you put it on the calendar and then you start working backwards from there and so, in some ways, big organizations having workshops can become intimidating for someone who is this end of the spectrum coming up. For those of us that have been around a while, it's okay, it doesn't matter if we know someone there or not. But for young people who are just testing the waters and not sure, if there could be a little bit more information out there, you know, and suggest that you bring a friend or here are individuals that are coming that you might know someone, or it's the networking. Which once again is communication, because if you can network and you can share an idea, oh, someone's coming from your town. Right there, that opened a door. There's communication. And, you know, just, it's all about communication.

Goldstein: Sure. Now didn't the Kentucky legislator, I want to say disempower, if that's the right word, the arts in the schools?

Bird: I'm not sure. . .

Goldstein: Didn't they cut funding to the arts? The arts were at the lower end of the totem pole when it came to funding.

Bird: Oh yes, and also you've got the school....site based management. Thank you. On site based management, they determine, are we going to have music, are we going to have art? Now, oh twenty three years ago, my son's elementary school didn't have art. Well, that was a wrong thing to say to an art teacher and so I made up a packet, every week, and I would take it in and I would give it to, you know, the teacher and now, there were two first grade classes, so I made two packets, because I wasn't going to deny another batch of kids art, and so, in turn, I would take the packets in and I would have the lesson plans and I would have, how it, you know, I mean, I'm sure maybe this lady liked it, maybe she wanted to kill me, I don't know. But I just wanted to share and that's what I told her, I said, "I'm an art teacher, I have a hard time with this and I want to share with you my knowledge," because at the time I was working with an elementary school student teacher and she was doing this, so many hands make work light [Laughter, Bird]. So it was that student teacher who was helping me put packet together and the hard part is finding one, teachers who are willing to take student teachers that is a major one. They joke at the University of Louisville, if you want to learn how to run an art department on a shoestring come see me, because, I run it on a shoestring, but the reality is, you never know when your funds are going to be cut, so you don't see how much money you can spend on it, but you plan ahead, you buy and you alternate what you're buying on what year. And so, the student teachers, in the case of my son's class, she put the packets together and it was really neat and exciting because she saw how she could help other teachers with her knowledge.

Goldstein: Now I know when I was in school. Elementary school, junior high and high school in New York, we had art classes. In fact, junior high and high school it was mandatory that everyone went to art classes. In elementary school, we were given the opportunity to take private music lessons on your instrument of choice and this was all provided by the school system.

Bird: Awesome.

Goldstein: So, I'm assuming that Kentucky has never met that level....

Bird: Alright, alright, I haven't been teaching in Kentucky since 1980. And I was fortunate to be at the Brown School, which was at the Brown Hotel and I had the most awesome room in the world. I had the width of the hotel from Broadway to the alley behind it and if you imagine that center hall where you'd have rooms on one side and rooms on the other, there were no walls. Broadway side was the dry side and was carpeted. The alley side was the wet side and it was linoleum. And it was the most awesome room to be in. There were no walls between myself and the next gal who was an English teacher, which was really neat, because they were studying movies. You know, so [Laughter, Bird]. But, in turn, there was a respect, and I had all the students, it was wonderful because I had middle school up. And in turn, every student was having skills and we had a report card that wasn't a traditional A or B or C. It was showing what skills the students had worked on, so we were looking at skills. And the skills aren't just art skills, but they're skills that cross the board. I found, some kids had problems with their manual dexterity and were having a terrible time using scissors. Well, it's interesting because we do have right handed scissors and left handed scissors and you know, non-descriptional scissors that it doesn't matter if your right handed or left handed and you start realizing that there's some students that have never really developed holding a pencil. I start off with teaching calligraphy. Everybody needs to know how to write. And so many schools now, it's all about the keyboard and the computer, and yet when students then need to pencil or pen in hand and write, you do a lot better if the teacher can read it.

Goldstein: Now when you were in [glitch in audio]

Bird: Taught calligraphy. I taught calligraphy. . .

Goldstein: And was that to every school?

Bird: That was to every student that came through the art department and I had the middle school, high school crew.

Goldstein: So every student that came through the art department. So that was a choice.

Bird: Martha Ellison. It might have been a choice, but the principal Martha Ellison made it. [Laughter, Bird] Not, I wouldn't say, mandatory, but the fact is, she worked on kid's schedules so that they came through art.

Goldstein: Okay, wonderful.

Bird: And then in turn, I had biological art classes. I had students....I mean let's put the biology and the art together. Down the street was a florist and I would hike down to the florist and I would hit them up for their flowers that they were throwing out and I would bring them back to school and I had students dissecting the flowers, so it wasn't just looking at a picture in a book,

but it was really looking at the flowers and the, you know. And in turn, one of my students went on to be a biologist, I mean, in botany. That was her area and it was because of cutting up flowers, you know, I mean, we did all sorts things. We dyed them. Everything you can think about. Why not use the resources at hand? I mean, I was already being the frugal art teacher by getting what somebody else was throwing away, but it was perfect for us, you know? What's ironic, the little kid, who I would see in the afternoons, when I would pick up the flowers, went on to be an art teacher, because she thought it was so neat and I met her because she was my student teacher and she said, you don't remember me, but you were the art teacher that came in and talked about what your art students were doing. So you don't know what you're going to do on your love, you know, reflecting on someone else.

Goldstein: But isn't that wonderful!

Bird: Oh, it was. Just great. She's still an art teacher.

Goldstein: I mean wonderful for you to know that sense of achievement.

Bird: Yes, and you know, she was a little kid and we'd go through them together and I would talk to her about it and you know, here she is all grown up and my student teacher.

Goldstein: One thing that comes to mind when we talk about science and art, in my desk, I have a brochure that the Kentucky Arts Council produced, I'm going to just say, fifteen years ago and I haven't seen anything like it, but I refer back to it frequently, because it shows the correlation of achievement in math and science based on the exposure to art and it's striking.

Bird: Oh, yea.

Goldstein: It's very impressive.

Bird: It is. It is. So many students are visual. So many learners are visual and if you can make the problem visual, you can solve it. Whatever it is. You know, we all know math, sure it's there. We can put the numbers down and we can see it, but whatever you're studying, if it's English, okay, you can draw a little picture. And when something takes on that visual, you can see it in your head and then you can plot out how you can go about solving it and above the door into my room, it says 'Problem Solving 101', you know, and I'm the one who painted it on and I'm waiting, they're going to paint this year. It'll be interesting to see if they paint it out, but [Laughter, Bird], because that's what it is. We're solving problems.

Goldstein: Well, is there anything else that you would like to add? It's sure been interesting and it's a pleasure speaking with you.

Bird: Thank you. It's just....You know, I think back over all other years and the time I spent at Guild fairs and going up the steps to the old Guild office, boy that place was hot in the summertime [Laughter, Bird], but so full of posters and artwork and it was exciting. I mean, it wasn't a very big space, but there were so many memories, chocked in that room, you know, you'd look at a poster, banners. The Guild at one point, I spearheaded this, making gigantic banners that we hung in Louisville, and we had a team of artists and craftsmen. We all got together and we cut out and worked on paper patterns so that they could be silkscreened, and it said the Kentucky Guild with all different areas of interest, you know, whether it looked like a basket or it was a shuttle or it was woodworking. . .

Goldstein: Now, was that used to promote the fairs or?

Bird: It was to promote the Guild

Goldstein: The Guild, oh wow.

Bird: Yes

Goldstein: You don't have any of those visuals ()?

Bird: Oh, well, yea. We had individuals help, you know, okay we may have had to pay for the fabric, you know, our silk screener did the silk screening, you know, just, so. But, it just brings back a trail of memories, you know, just the good, to say, outweighs the frustrating times, you know, tenfold.

Goldstein: We actually, when I was active in the Guild, we wanted to do any exhibit of the Guild posters. . .

Bird: Oh, my gosh, that would have been awesome.

Goldstein: And we couldn't locate them. Supposedly, Berea College had them in their archives, but they couldn't find them. So, I'd love to do that someday.

Bird: Oh that would be awesome. Maybe that's when the all call goes out and let's see who's got a poster. You know. . .

[Laughter, Goldstein]

Bird: You never know, okay, it's under your bed, dust it off and bring it out. Just. So, isn't that where everybody keeps. . .?

Goldstein: Right, right. I ought to do that.

Bird: Yea. Just, but everybody keeps their posters under their bed, right? [Laughter, Bird].

Goldstein: Thank you very, very much for your time and sharing all these interesting stories and your history with us.

Bird: Well, thank you! Thank you for....oh taking me back down memory lane. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW