

**Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.**

**Interview with Walter Cornelison**

**August 12, 2008**

**Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz**

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, this is Greg Willihnganz. I'm going to be interviewing Walter Cornelison at the Bybee Pottery in Bybee, Kentucky. First we're gonna take a little walk through the pottery itself. So we'll go in this way to the showroom and take you through the place. That's all our display area, and ah, here's the office. I see some of the founders in the (unintelligible) wall there. Now we'll take a walk down into the, ah, production area. Now this is the kiln up here? Is that what we're looking at?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you fire all those up at once?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): All at once.

WILLIHNGANZ: How long does it take to fire them up?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Well, it takes two to three hours to get it up to (unintelligible) degrees.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, how many years has that kiln been working?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Ah, this one here? Let's see here, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1950.  
(Laughter- WILLIHNGANZ) That's good?

WILLIHNGANZ: Fifty-eight years, yeah.

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Mmm, that's when they put in this kiln right here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Huh. Now these pots back here have all been fired, or have they just been dried?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): They're just--they're just sitting there drying.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see.

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Watch the cable back there!

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Don't fall over the cord.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see the cable, thank you.

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE): Trust me; it'll sneak up on you.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, especially if you're carrying a camera, looking through the camera. (Voices in the background) Howdy.

(UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE): Excuse me. How are you doing?

WILLIHNGANZ: Mind if I take some shots in here?

(UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE): Go ahead.

WILLIHNGANZ: Thanks.

(UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE): UNKNOWN FEMALE): Anywhere you want to.

WILLIHNGANZ: I appreciate it. So this is your potters' wheel?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2): No, they're right there, two potters' wheels are.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh. What does this do? (Water splashing)

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2): This is called a jigger wheel.

WILLIHNGANZ: Jigger wheel? (TV or radio in background)

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2): Yes

WILLIHNGANZ: What do you do with it?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2: Ah, (unintelligible)

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2: (unintelligible) (TV or radio noise)

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. (Working noises and TV/Radio in background) How old is this building?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That's the original building right there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right there.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: And that dates back to the early 1800's. That's the original room.

WILLIHNGANZ: Original room, wow. The early 1800's, huh?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Mm hmm.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's seen a lot of pots.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Uh huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: How long have you worked here?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thirty years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Thirty years. What's your name?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Brenda.

WILLIHNGANZ: Brenda? Oh.

BRENDA: Oh, be careful.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, a little low.

BRENDA: Low fan here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. Wow. (Water splashing) So do you do just the shaping and whatnot, or do you do the...

BRENDA: I do all the finishing, all the handles, the flutes; every piece that's made I have to do something to it.

WILLIHNGANZ: And do you do the, ah, design on it, or glazing, or all that, or is...?

BRENDA: No, no, ah, the boys in the other room does it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah.

BRENDA: I'm like an inspector thirteen, I guess. If it's bad, I ditch it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. Are you going to put handles on that?

BRENDA: No, I just do the fluted edges.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah.

BRENDA: I'll get something and put a handle on it and show you how...

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

BRENDA: ...to put a handle on it. Let me get a piece over here.

WILLIHNGANZ: And that's all you have to do, and that handle will stand up?

BRENDA: Stay right there, uh huh...

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, that's amazing.

BRENDA: ...after it's dried and glazed.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

BRENDA: Now it could be knocked off or something; it's real fragile right now, but...

WILLIHNGANZ: Hmm, wow. That's terrific, thank you.

BRENDA: You're welcome.

WILLIHNGANZ: When was this part of the building added?

(UNIDENTIFIED #3) You're gonna have to ask one of those boys down there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE #3) I'm really not sure.

WILLIHNGANZ: When was this part of the building added?

(UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4) I'm sorry?

WILLIHNGANZ: When was this part of the building added to the original? Do you know?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: Daddy, Ernest build this on?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #5: Yeah, I think so.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: Ah, my grandfather took over in '39?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #5: Something like that.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: In '39. So it had to be from '39 to--he died July the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969. But I remember it--this was always here, (I just turned 56), this was always here during my lifetime.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: It was different; it used to be a big tunnel kiln that ran through here that ran all the way down to the sales room, but it was ah--it's been here quite a

long time. Of course we've redone some things. The kiln, it was 1978 (unintelligible) rebuilt it...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #5: '76.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: It was '76; I was in college, wasn't I?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #5: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: '76 we redid the kiln and, ah, changed some things in here. So it's, you know, it's been here a while, been here somehow.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, thanks.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #4: You're welcome.

WILLIHNGANZ: Alright, I'm gonna have my mind--keep watching here. Okay, I think we are now going well.

CORNELISON: Alright, now where do we want to start? (Laughter- CORNELSON) I mean, how far back do you...

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, let's start--let's start back with your family history. You're Walter Cor--

CORNELISON: Yes, I'm Walter. My grandfather was Walter, and I--it goes back to my great, great grandfather...

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CORNELISON: ...was in the pottery business. Eh, in th--the old round building that you have at the far end of where they started it, it's very old. My grandfather used the date 1809; my father used it eighteen--used the date 1845; he had paperwork through that, but we--well my grandfather had some paperwork, where he got it, I don't know. They were--done their business out of their pocket and checkbook. That's about the way he did it. But, ah, it came down through and they--each--each generation added different colors, different shapes, ah, different ideas of how to make pottery and everything. The boys are far better. Ah, the pottery is far better than even I made for years. Ah, I was improving it along, but they--they stepped it up. Th--they've done a wonderful job with it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now Walter, what is it you love about the pottery? What makes you want to do this?

CORNELISON: You--it's--it's a thing that you can start and, and get results, see the results, it--it's awful nice to start up there with clay and follow it through and come down here, watch people buy it, ah, like it and buy it. It's--it's—it's just rewarding.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. Now, as you've worked in your art form here in the--in the clay here, have you had the chance to get involved with a lot of other potters and a lot of other crafts people?

CORNELISON: Well, not that many potters, I've--some potters--I've--a lot of craft people; I worked with the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and Southern Highland Guild, and ah, the local fairs and things that--around Richmond, Berea, and 'course, got associated with the people at Berea. We worked hand in hand together for years. Ah...

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about the Guild and what you did with that.

CORNELISON: Ah...

CORNELISON'S SON BUZZY: Which Guild?

WILLIHNGANZ: The Kentucky--Guild.

CORNELISON: Kentucky Guild? Okay, it was formed Kentucky Guild basic--basically for, ah, people to have a--sales for their product. Ah, they helped them out a little bit, helped them improve, helped us I should be saying, improve their lye pottery, ah, providing fairs for where they could sell themselves. ah, that was just plain nice to be associated with people that had the same ideas pretty much as you did, even though they might--might not be selling pottery, they'd sell another craft, they w--they would be associated with you and you mix with them. And spend a--spend a--three or four days out in the hot sun (Laughter- CORNELISON), but you, ah, enjoyed it, being around people; it got to be work. But a lot of people, governors, senators, all, they'd come by and provided you with the means of meeting people and, and being a part of the world.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now when did you get involved with the Kentucky Guild? The Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen...

CORNELISON: Uh huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...started in 1960.

CORNELISON: My--my father was a charter member.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah.

CORNELISON: And I came in under him and when he died, of course, ah, I automatically was grandfathered in, er, or came in.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you folks get involved with the original fairs that they held?

CORNELISON: Yes. We sure did.

WILLIHNGANZ: Were you at them?

CORNELISON: Yes, I was.

WILLIHNGANZ: Can you tell me what they were like? Do you remember 'em, how they went?

CORNELISON: They were--there was some work to it. (Laughter-CORNELISON). Believe me, there was some work, but it was rewarding, very rewarding. People with little children and things come by; they just couldn't believe the wheel, potters' wheel, and a lot of older people couldn't believe the way they were made. Ah, a very rewarding thing to--to be a part of.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. Did you bring a potters' wheel to one of the fairs?

CORNELISON: Yes, we had a potters' wheel we could travel with.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you were throwing pots right there during the...

CORNELISON: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...the fair?

CORNELISON: We'd just go out on the ground and drive stakes in the ground and tack our wheel to it so it--level it up and, so it wouldn't wobble, just glide.

WILLIHNGANZ: And ah, were you at the first, ah, of the Kentucky Guild Sales?

CORNELISON: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. My understanding was, ah, it was in a park somewhere, and you had to walk up a whole thing, and I thought...

CORNELISON: Indian Fort Theatre?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

CORNELISON: That's where it was?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

CORNELISON: That's right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, and ah, and it rained on you, I guess.

CORNELISON: Oh, yes. (Laughter- WILLIHNGANZ)

WILLIHNGANZ: How did pots survive that?

CORNELISON: They--we just took plastic, covered everything up until it quit raining. People come by (Laughter-CORNELISON) (unintelligible), but they wanted to be there; they seemed to enjoy it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. What would you say influenced the style of your pottery and the way you've made things?

CORNELISON: The influence, I'd s--You know that our fi--our pottery has ev--evolved and ah, to be what it is now, but we still tried--the most influence we had on it, is we tried to make use of the pottery, that you would use and buy more. We--it wasn't decorative pottery, although we decorate some now, but basically our pottery is usable pottery.

WILLIHNGANZ: So it's functional. That's (unintelligible)

CORNELISON: Functional is better.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, obviously, you can't sell it if it's ugly.

CORNELISON: (Laughter-CORNELISON) Yes, that's true.

WILLIHNGANZ: And they have very pretty designs, ah, and I, you know, I've been to--I live right near Middle Town, so I go to your pottery shop there, and I bought pottery at that shop, so it's ah...

CORNELISON: Uh huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...when I walked out here, it's all pretty familiar to me, actually. Ah...

CORNELISON: (Laughter-CORNELISON) Uh huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...Ah, and ah, and I just wonder how you chose the, the, the styles of the pieces that you do and, you know, were there influences on you?

CORNELISON: A lot of--the customers had a lot of influence on us. They'd come in and they'd say, "Can you make this?" and they, "Could you make it like this?" or something like that. We'd make one or two for them, the next thing you'd know they'd be a st—there'd be a stock number. The customers, ah, chose a lot of things for us.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. When you were in the Guild, did you attend any of the classes that they had on marketing and whatnot?

CORNELISON: Not--not the Kentucky Guild, uh uh, no I didn't.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now you were also involved with the Highland Guild?

CORNELISON: Yes.

CORNELISON'S SON BUZZY: Southern Highland Guild.

CORNELISON: Southern...

BUZZY: Southern Highland Guild of Artists and Craftsmen.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah, the Southern Highland Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

CORNELISON: Well, my grandfather was a charter member of that. (Laughter-CORNELISON).

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CORNELISON: Ah, we were about the furthest north; there was one other fella, made dulcimers in Winchester, ah, I can't call his name, Buzzy.

BUZZY: Ah, it's ah...

CORNELISON: Well anyway, he was a--he was from here to Winchester, further north than we were, eh, out on the very edge.

BUZZY: Ledford?

CORNELISON: Ledford, Homer Ledford.

BUZZY: Ho—Homer Ledford, yeah.

CORNELISON: Yes. He's dead, now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: And ah--but my g--, as I say, my grandfather was there, and they--they sold Rockefeller Center, ah, they had a shop in New York, and ah, I don't know, they sold ah, in ah--on the Blue Ridge Parkway and ah, they sold a lot of different places that I just can't remember just to be honest. But ah...

BUZZY: Two fairs a year.

CORNELISON: Yes, they had a fair in spring, one in fall.

WILLIHNGANZ: Was the, ah, Southern Highland Guild bigger than the Kentucky Guild?

CORNELISON: Oh, yes. Covered several states, they could--several states. And which North Carolina was the, where they chartered it...

BUZZY: Asheville.

CORNELISON: Yeah, it--it was bigger, it had more shops, had a lot of potteries, ah, weavers, ah, glass makers, ah, whittlers, ah, what wh--what else, ironworkers, ah, wrought iron. They had a man in there; he was a descendent of Daniel Boone. (Laughter- CORNELISON) He was a character; he drank a lot, but, (Laughter- WILLIHNGANZ) ah, they couldn't keep him sober (unintelligible). But he was unbelievable. He was just a mountain man. Ah, he lived down in the Black--Black Mountains, ah, lived on Black Mountain, I think, where he lived in North Carolina, but he was--he knew what he was doing when he took a piece of wrought iron. He could make--he'd--he'd make it right there for them to watch...

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: ...and hand it to 'em, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now you said your work, ah, the-- the work that you have done here has sort of evolved over time.

CORNELISON: Oh yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: How--how would you describe that change?

CORNELISON: Well, the best way I--I--could--I could show you, I've--we've got some old pottery out there at the Highland Vault and, very, very crude pottery, stone jars and churns, and things like that that they'd use; I've heard 'em tell about, well about a mile, mile and a half off the river, and they would haul these stone jars, what we call stoneware to the river, put 'em on flat boats and go up the river in the fall of the year. Ah, some people can--some people canned in the pottery and from that we went from ch--churns and jugs to the pottery you see now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. (Background voices) Okay, ah, pretty much, has this always been a--a group operation? It looks like you've got quite a few people; you've got how many employees here?

CORNELISON: Ah, we don't have many of those--yes it has since I've known it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: It's--it's been local--local people pretty much.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. Now, have you always sold just out of this area, or do you have the--the two stores, do you actually get revenue from the Bybee pottery in, in Louisville?

CORNELISON: Ah, that's my nephew. He comes here and buys it...

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh.

CORNELISON: ...and resells it.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see.

CORNELISON: And some of the stuff he makes. He makes his own stuff; it's our clay; he comes and gets clay and--and pottery.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see. Okay. So then ah--so then you just have this outlet and that outlet, is that right?

CORNELISON: Well yes, my other--let me--I'd better change it just a little bit. Ah, we sell to shops, ah, and they resell it. We, ah--what would be a ideal shop for us, like Ronnie, but ah, ah, Appalachian Crafts over in Berea, is a gift shop that buys from us. Ah, they sell re--both retail and wholesale out of the same shop.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. (A lot of voices in the background)

BUZZY: What was your question, Dad?

CORNELISON: It's not a question, I think you--they're bothering you, aren't they?

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I'm sort of picking up a lot of (unintelligible)

BUZZY: Okay, they're fine now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Thank you, I appreciate that. Okay, ah, now you've ah--I know that the--I've been to Louisville Stoneware's operation--

CORNELISON: Oh, yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you ever talk to those folks? Ah, do you them? Are you--do you...?

CORNELISON: I knew--I knew the, ah, well what was his name? I was just a kid when Dad took me to Louisville Stoneware. We'd--I'd wander through it, ah Hadley...

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: Louisville Stoneware. 'Course Hadley was, shoot, Ms. Hadley work--worked for Louisville Stoneware. That's where she--she became--she was a decorator for 'em. Then she took over a pottery herself; and then she--she, ah...

BUZZY: It was Mary Alice Hadley.

CORNELISON: Mary Alice Hadley. She and her husband, they both (unintelligible). Now I understand Louisville Pottery is--I don't know that it's out of business, but it's--it's changed business or something.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Have--did you at any time, the--the three, ah, potters there; did you work together, cooperatively?

CORNELISON: Oh yes, yes, yes. We still do with Hadley.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: There was one time Louisville wanted to come here. Ah, what had happened? Oh, the city took over their property, ah, and ah, they thought about coming here; they come here to look at it and everything; they wanted to go in business with us. But instead of that they said, "No", and they went up into Crittenden County and went into real estate I understand. The Robertsons, oh no, it was generated--generation before the Robertsons.

BUZZY: It wasn't the Taylors was it, Daddy?

CORNELISON: That goes back--yes.

BUZZY: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: Taylor, Taylor is wh--...

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me--

CORNELISON: Ac--, actually he sold some of the pottery, the pottery itself under Taylor. He had a line of--of dinnerware that he decorated and sold it under Taylor Pottery. And, ah, Louisville Stoneware, he had the jars and the churns (unintelligible). They're hard to find now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: People just don't make 'em.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Now it looks like you pretty much still make everything by hand as opposed to any kind of machine operation?

CORNELISON: Yes, the mold and cast and everything. Well then up until last November we made most everything by hand. Ah, the--anything we made by mold was more or less a sideline in a way, but 'course I've been out of the bandbox, I--I've turned a few pieces. If I'm not satisfied, Mark and I turn it, ah, to where I'd be comfortable. My--it affected that hand a little bit, believe it or not, that one finger.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: I don't know whether it's arthritis or what. I can work it up and--but I have to be thankful because those--the whole arm and the whole hand, the whole side was dead, and it started coming back about two or three days later. They had--the doctors, one of 'em, ah, stood over me; he said, "I don't know how we're gonna straighten all this up". I didn't know what I was going through, you--you don't know. I haven't been si--I worked the day before I (cough--"excuse me") the day before I, ah, had the stroke, got up on--I worked on Friday, ah, three thirty, three o'clock, and then I--when I got up Saturday morning I had a headache and I laid back down, and I didn't feel good, and I laid th - sat back in the chair and couldn't get out of the chair, it just hit--that was it. But that's--very fortunate...

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes it was.

CORNELISON: They thought they was gonna lose me for a couple of days.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, yeah, you're ah, you're a lucky man, that's true. So, ah, you're still active with the Guild and you still work with those folks.

CORNELISON: Yes sir, anything we can do for 'em.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. Do you exhibit at their fairs? They still have fairs, don't they?

CORNELISON: We don't have enough people, right now t--t--to leave here. We--w--we go to their fairs, we're taking away from this place.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

CORNELISON: We had to qu--I used to go to the board for the Kentucky Guild, go away and leave this and people'd come here. And it was just not a--a very good thing for us to do I don't think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. Ah, so how do you promote your work? Y—you seem to be, frankly, out in the country. (Laughter-CORNELISON) Yeah, it was a long way out here, and I wonder how you get people to come here.

CORNELISON: By word of mouth.

WILLIHNGANZ: Really?

CORNELISON: We do not advertise.

WILLIHNGANZ: So it's all word of mouth, huh?

CORNELISON: Mm hmm.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. It's amazing to me that you can keep all this (unintelligible)...

CORNELISON: Well, the time we've been here has something to do with that, too. We've been here so long, so many people know us.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm. hmm. Okay. Do you, ah, subscribe to any periodicals or magazines, ah, for like your craft, that relates specifically to pottery and pottery techniques and all that?

CORNELISON: Yes, ah, Ceramic Industry and ah, the Si...

BUZZY: Eskimo.

CORNELISON: Yeah, the Eskimo, one we really depend on. The new ideas that come out in it, ah, the new p--potteries, ah, pottery kilns, ah, and all sorts of things like that that they've come out with, and it's things they've learned about, it's like every other industry.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. Now, are you members of ah, any national groups that ah...

CORNELISON: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...work with crafts?

CORNELISON: No, we're not.

WILLIHNGANZ: So at this point you're members of the Guild, you're still members of the Southern...

CORNELISON: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...Highlands Guild? Any other groups that you belong to?

CORNELISON: Not that I know of.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Were you ever an officer in the--the Kentucky Guild?

CORNELISON: Not in the Kentucky Guild. I was in Southern Highland Guild.

BUZZY: You were. That's right, that's right.

WILLIHNGANZ: What, ah, did you...?

CORNELISON: My father was.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. What did you do in the Southern Highland Guild? What office...

CORNELISON: I was one of the board members.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh. When was that?

CORNELISON: Oooh, it's a--it's a long time ago. Ah, 50's or 60's...

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

CORNELISON: ...somewhere in there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh huh.

CORNELISON: It--it was--it was tough on us, it was so long--most--well, they had a meeting once a year in North Carolina because that's where they're chartered. By law you have to meet once a year in the... And ah, again as I say, when I did that and I left, I took away from here, and then s--such a small place and doing so much ourselves, it ah, it made a difference.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. Okay. What, ah, what do think the effect or the importance of these Guilds is to craft work?

CORNELISON: Oh it, ah, I'm sure it's influenced much of it. I know it influenced us. Ah, and eh, our pottery, the--our colors, ah, for instance in our shapes an awful lot; and though we ah--we didn't--making all I could, we still tried to stay within the--where it was usable. Ah, for instance, with putting the handle on, it was in the back our mind all this time that we'd make that handle the right size, not too big so it's knocked off, but just enough that it was usable and you'd handle it--we always kept those sort of--sort of things in mind. Ah, but as far as other people are concerned, I'm sure, I'm sure we interest one another. We was around different things th--in--in the Guild where everybody is in things, and ah, (phones ringing) you come to find out that you could do something a little bit different than--and make it more practical and things, ah, just being with people, we were constantly trying to improve. Ah, it was awful easy, back when I was growing up, "Oh, that's alright, I can make it, just make this way and this way". Ah, I never--as I could, I improved the pottery that I was making on the wheel; I wanted better pottery. You know, I'm a--for instance, I'm ashamed now to go make pottery on the wheel because I can't make it like I want it, the shape. I can make a piece of pottery, but I can't make that little extra shape; you take a pitcher and where you get that bulge on that wheel, the sides, what it's gonna look like, you--you don't think about it, but it's there. And if I

don't get it right, I'm very disappointed. I don't want to make a bad piece of pottery. I don't ever at this stage of the game; make a bad piece of pottery. I will, and they'd fuss at me, ah, before I got sick, they fussed at me; I (unintelligible) I'd come to a piece I'd made that I didn't like, I'd break it up, and put it back through in the wet clay and reuse it. I--I just didn't want it. Ah, as long as Bybee Pottery is here, I want it to stand for something; and I--that's why I'm so, so proud of what the boys are doing. They seemed--I don't know whether they think about it that way, but that's the way it's still--they're doing it.

WILLIHNGANZ: What do you feel Bybee Pottery stands for?

CORNELISON: It stands for g--good, usable, practical, ah, pottery that's, ah, a pleasure to--to observe and nice. It--it--that just about covers everything. It--it stands for--we've been here a long time and they can know--pe--people, older people know what it used to look like and they come--we have 'em come back, "Oh, this has improved, this is better, and this, this color is better", or something like that. And, ah, also durable is what--we go for that, too.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, there a lot of pottery places and a lot of craft places that aren't fully, ah, handmade, or they sort of cheated a little bit; and, you know, I used to think there was just manufactured goods and there's handmade goods, but there's actually a gradation in there.

CORNELISON: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: There's a lot of different things in there. It sounds like you've stayed a little truer to the handmade concept.

CORNELISON: Ah, we--we certainly, certainly did. Ah, we have a pitcher here that they're making f--for me now, but they put a handle on it by hand, shape it, and a spout, and a little spout, so it's at least half hand-done, now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, Louisville Pottery has taken a different marketing approach. They actually are getting stuff into the malls and various stores and that; how do you feel about that as a--a way to promote your business.

CORNELISON: Well, we're too small to try to handle that. We couldn't supply--we had a chance, ah, what was it, N--New York that wanted to take us over?

BUZZY: Oh. Bloomingdales.

CORNELISON: Bloomingdales. We used to (unintelligible) up with them. They were ready to take all we could make, but potters are businesses th--that (unintelligible) for that, those big corporations, those big companies--would go right along and then they'd find something a little cheaper or a little better or saved 'em more and drop 'em and they were ruined; they lost the rest of their customers, we wouldn't--we wouldn't buy it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, huh. Ah, have you, ah, won any awards for your pottery, gotten any recognition?

CORNELISON: No...

CORNELISON'S SON: Well, the National Historic Registry, ah, but as far as – and--and we're on permanent display; some of our wares are on permanent display at the Smithsonian.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, wow. (Laughter-CORNELISON)

CORNELISON'S SON: Ahh ...

WILLIHNGANZ: That's pretty...

CORNELISON'S SON: ... but as far as, you know, winning the blue ribbon for the pitcher or, you know ah, the best pie crust, ah no, we don't have any of those. Dad has now reached ah, ah, with the Southern Highland Guild, he is a, now a lifetime member, non dues-paying, all that, and you have to have been around for a long time for that, ah, which is very important with the Guild. But ah, no, that's about it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Have you been involved in teaching pottery?

CORNELISON: Naw. (Laughter-CORNELISON) I've had opportunities, but ah, just wasn't enough of me. (Laughter-CORNELISON) (Laughter- WILLIHNGANZ)

WILLIHNGANZ: What ah--I'm looking here at--we had some questions about the Guild artists, ah, people who were at the early fairs, ah, and you talked a little bit about being in some of those early fairs...

CORNELISON: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...and showing things. Did you make a lot of acquaintances, a lot of...?

CORNELISON: Oh yes, I worked right beside the glass makers. We--we--to be honest we'd still show between the hand-turned pottery there, and it starts back at--he was Blinko. They--w--we'd just have them crowded around us; and ah, we kind of got all...

BUZZY: It wasn't Blinko, was it Daddy?

CORNELISON: I think so, it--they...

BUZZY: Blinko is West Virginia.

CORNELISON: I know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, was that the Kentucky fair or the, or the Berea fair?

CORNELISON: Uh, that's Southern Highland.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's the Southern Highland.

BUZZY: Oh, the Southern Highland. Okay, never mind, yes, okay.

CORNELISON: Yes, I'd ah, ah, I--this Indian, he done whittling; they couldn't do anything with him either. He was, he was a very, very proud man, ah, he's down in Cherokee, North Carolina. And ah, they couldn't do a thing with him; they had to haul him in, haul him back, and, and ah, he just wasn't gonna do anything for himself. But, they were characters; I'm--I'm sure they thought that I was a character, too. We probably all were. (Laughter-CORNELISON). Probably all w--. I had, you know...

WILLIHNGANZ: Did it change you as an artist? Did it change your (unintelligible)?

CORNELISON: Oh, it put ideas in my mind, yes. I realized it--different way of doing things.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: And I think I thought about things. Yes, it did.

WILLIHNGANZ: How did that make you feel as a--as a--as a crafts person to be part of this group? Did--did that help you?

CORNELISON: Ah, I'm honored, very honored.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, ah, do you think it increases the public's awareness of craft work?

CORNELISON: Oh, I know they have, th-- they've increased it. Yes Sir, (unintelligible) quite a lot--people through those advertisements, or brochures and things that they put out.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now you do market through ah, the, the ah, I believe through, ah, Berea's College? Do you have anything that...

CORNELISON: Not--not now, no.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you at one time?

CORNELISON: Yes. We, ah, it was in two places. We were at the hotel, and ah, we were also at the log house.

WILLIHNGANZ: And there was at one time a lot of, ah, handcrafts being sold at the state park, ah, visitor centers. Did you ever sell any pottery to them?

CORNELISON: Oh, yes, we sold a lot of pottery to them.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm.

CORNELISON: Yes, sir.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is that currently going on, or that no longer active?

CORNELISON: No, it isn't.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm. So what's happened with the Guild's activities that it's sort of dropped in membership and dropped in activities?

CORNELISON: Father Time just took its toll us, just like me, I'm not much good to them now, but--and so many of us passed away. I--that's all I know and th--the next generation didn't--didn't take hold.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you think that craft work in general is increasing in popularity or decreasing in popularity?

CORNELISON: I don't th--I think decreasing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Hmm. So you see less of it around? Is that what you think?

CORNELISON: Well, less, ah, local. Ah, I think a lot of it is foreign potteries--comes in.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm hmm, okay. Well, that's probably all I have right now.

CORNELISON: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: Anything else you'd like to say?

CORNELISON: Not that I know of. Ah, (Laughter-CORNELISON) I'm a pretty simple person, you know, it don't take very many words to describe me.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, looks like you've had a good life...

CORNELISON: Yes! Been very, very fortunate, family...

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well, thank you very much for ...

CORNELISON: You're very welcome.

WILLIHNGANZ: ... your time, I appreciate it. Okay.