

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Fred Shepherd and Emily Wolfson

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Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

FRED SHEPHERD AND EMILY WOLFSON PART 1

[Some chatting before interview begins – apparently Shepherd is telling about something that happened in the past to an acquaintance or coworker of theirs.]

SHEPHERD: And Dick, but Dick never got to work before 11 o'clock.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: That was Dick.

WOLFSON: That was Dick.

SHEPHERD: But he had had it. He went into that office. He was as red as that chair. Said, "God damn it, Dick, Gordon, you dumb son of a bitch. Get me my ball for my typewriter!" You got, he just, one up side, down the other. ***[Shepherd laughs]***

WOLFSON: I can't believe...

SHEPHERD: Poor Dick was not the same for the whole day. The whole idea – I think he felt personally violated that this man...

WOLFSON: Well, of course.

SHEPHERD: ...would go into his office and take his things and...

WOLFSON: He had no business in there, and what did he do with it? Put it on his typewriter?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, yeah, too cheap to go get another one I guess.

WOLFSON: Oh, for Heaven's sake.

WILLIHNGANZ: ***[unintelligible – something about a chair]***

WOLFSON: I didn't know that.

SHEPHERD: He was an absolute idiot.

WOLFSON: Oh, my, well, I've got to change chairs, ' cause I'm too low.
[Wolfson laughs]

SHEPHERD: Okay, you want to get up on – put the pillows up there?

WILLIHNGANZ: Here, here. You want these?

WOLFSON: We'll just move the chairs.

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's just change chairs. Yeah, change chairs. There you go.

WOLFSON: We always - I had to take pillows with me to buy my last car.
[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.] Oh, my!

SHEPHERD: Oh, my!

AT THIS POINT, WILLIHNGANZ STARTS THE INTERVIEW.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, tell me a little bit about the uh, the early years. When did you join, Fred, when did you join that Guild?

SHEPHERD: I think it was in 1967 or '68.

WOLFSON: I think that's about right.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, around that time.

WOLFSON: I think it was '67 that we started the fair.

SHEPHERD: Yeah.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: And, the first fairs were hysterical. 'Course, we were all excited about going to the Indian Fort, wherever that was, and we discovered that when we got to Berea.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: But, you entered into the big parking lot, which was below a trail that led to the Indian Fort, and the craft persons would be on either side of this trail, that proceeded all the way up to the amphitheater and the Indian Fort. And when we got up there, we were greeted by the chair...was Garry, I guess, Garry Barker, and there was nothing to put your work on except you were directed to a pile of concrete blocks.

WOLFSON: I think it was Rich Bellando then.

SHEPHERD: Maybe it was...it was Richard.

WOLFSON: 'Cause he just started.

SHEPHERD: You're right, Richard Bellando and his wife. Um, you were directed to a bunch of concrete block and slab wood, and it was simply a first come first serve deal. And, here I was with my forty-eight pieces, eagerly, sitting on the side of the hill with uh. I got four concrete blocks and three boards or four boards, however many it was, **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** and uh, and had the good fortune to sell most of the pieces that I'd brought.

WOLFSON: That's great.

SHEPHERD: So, I went away from that initial experience, you know, just hopping, hopping and skipping.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: And was cause for returning in the future, but that was just part of. The ...there was no...the path up to there was not paved. There was just a mud, you know, flat, clay surface. And in some years, and especially the first year, it was very, very wet. And that thing just turned to mud all the way up the hill. You know, when it rained, the two dimensional folks, the painters, printmakers, watercolorists, simply, because there were no tents then – they had to run out there to their cars and fetch plastic...

WOLFSON: Well, we sent a lot of plastic. We sent a lot of plastic, and they put it under that. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]**

SHEPHERD: For those who had the plastic, they were fortunate enough to get it covered while it was raining. But, as I was talking before, in the days before, you know, gallery matt board and good materials, their work suffered a great deal when it got wet.

WOLFSON: Oh.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, which was a shame, but it didn't seem to deter them at all. I think that night, in the evening when the fair closed, most of the people camped out or slept in their car. I slept in my car, first year. And, there was always something with music instruments. There was always something going around. So, everybody gathered together with a glass of wine or a bottle of beer, and it was, I don't think anybody slept for three days. **[Wolfson laughs]** I'm willing to bet on that. They just had a great time, even though they were, you know, the mud, and the rain, and the rest of those kinds of things.

WOLFSON: How did Clara let you off that long?

SHEPHERD: Huh?

WOLFSON: How did...didn't you have to go Wednesday to get set up for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. **[Wolfson laughs]** I don't know. It was a lots...it's a long trip.

WOLFSON: She pushed didn't she?

SHEPHERD: Yeah. But there was...that was part of the problem for us in Western Kentucky, going to Berea. We liked going. But it was always, it was always a, it was always a travel...

WOLFSON: ...problem.

SHEPHERD: What is it – three hundred and four hundred and some miles to Richmond? Anyway, then you gotta go south.

WOLFSON: Yes.

SHEPHERD: A friend of mine...

WOLFSON: It's about three hundred miles to Berea, as I remember.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, yeah. And that was the days they had toll roads.

WOLFSON: Yes. **[Wolfson laughs]**

SHEPHERD: A friend of mine who will be nameless...

WOLFSON: Yes.

SHEPHERD: ...drove that in a little under three and a half hours.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** You know who I'm talking about. Alright, he said he just put his foot to the floor and never went below ninety-five miles an hour. **[Shepherd laughs]** Ohhh, but he's, I won't tell who he is, but he's a dear, sweet person. He's just the greatest.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: But those early years were something, were really something.

WOLFSON: Something, yeah, yeah.

SHEPHERD: I don't think...was it you were saying the advent of the tents?

WOLFSON: I thought they came the next year, but I may be wrong. They came within a couple of years.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. That was a saving grace.

WOLFSON: Yes, that was. I think Bellando; he had come to us from the Southern Highlands Guild...

SHEPHERD: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

WOLFSON: ...and, I think he realized that we just couldn't do that. And, I think that he went ahead and ordered the tents for the second time...year, but I may be wrong. I didn't get up there the first year, because my mother had a bad accident. And I had, I had everything kind of organized to go, and we had somebody take a lot of our stuff. I can't remember who that was.

SHEPHERD: Oh, my goodness! Oh, I see, in their cars with them. Yeah. They also have electricity, too, ***[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]*** which, sometimes back in the early days of TVA when people first got electricity in their homes...they didn't have it the first couple of years, until they got electricity along with the tents. And, of course, you were summarily charged extra for that.

WOLFSON: So. I didn't get into all that night business either, because Bob Evans drove me up there, and then I guess he drove back home. I don't know what he did. He didn't, did he exhibit? I can't remember.

SHEPHERD: I can't remember.

WOLFSON: Anyway, no. I think he was on the board. And, so I stayed in the Berea, what's the place?

SHEPHERD: Hotel.

WOLFSON: Hotel.

SHEPHERD: ***[unintelligible]***

WOLFSON: And so, so I had to retire at night, and you all were having a great time.

SHEPHERD: We were having a wonderful time.

WOLFSON: Now, I don't...I think that we quit having to go four days fairly soon. How...

SHEPHERD: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

WOLFSON: ...because that was too long.

SHEPHERD: You were allowed to come in there Thursday and set up.

WOLFSON: Oh, you were? Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, and then a lot of people would come in then.

WOLFSON: Thursday afternoon and Friday?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WOLFSON: But then, have to stay 'til Sunday afternoon and come home, and get up the next morning....

SHEPHERD: Oh, yeah, if you had to teach back here in Murray, which we did. That was a haul.

WOLFSON: Monday morning at seven thirty. ***[Wolfson laughs]***

SHEPHERD: Yeah, that was a haul, because the fair didn't end, as I recall, 'til five o'clock.

WOLFSON: I think that's right.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, the first fair. So then, you were looking at uh, you know, a good four to five hour drive at night, through the toll booths and all, ***[Wolfson laughs]*** waiting for a flat tire.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now the tents that your speaking of are, were they the individual tents like they have now?

SHEPHERD: Yes, yes.

WOLFSON: They were striped, too. They were very colorful. ***[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]***

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, but the...as I said before, the watercolorists and the printmakers, boy, they took it on the nose.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: But, it didn't faze them, they were right back the next year.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: They had, you know, like most human beings, had adjusted to some pre-disclosed method of dealing with all the, all the rain, and whatever happened to come. That was fun.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, Fred, were you active in any of the official roles there? Were you on the Board or...

WOLFSON: He was President!

SHEPHERD: I was on the board for a couple of years, and also was President in – I can't remember when it was, seventy-eight or seventy-seven, seventy-eight. No, I think Dick Jackson was President in seventy-seven.

WOLFSON: Yes, I think so.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I was in seventy-eight, and then I think Trudy Thompson from Fulton succeeded me, and there were, most, obviously, most of the people who were in the Guild, and were working craftsmen, were a part of that group. And, we would meet, once or twice a year, usually at Shakertown, which was really, which was really fun.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm. That's a dream place to meet!

SHEPHERD: Yeah, it was! It's a wonderful place to meet. And we'd have our annual meeting there. But those, people went on and off the Board and served, I can't remember, one or two years, or three years, depending upon, when the vacancy was...They're in the middle now of nominating people for, for, the Board.

WOLFSON: We still have nominations, but I don't have, don't know anybody to nominate, so, 'cause I don't know anybody who are members here. ***[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]***

SHEPHERD: Well, I haven't been there since seventy-eight, so...

WOLFSON: And we don't have, we don't get pushed to do it as we did when Clara was here.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, well, she was a wonderful person – the driving force.

WILLIHNGANZ: Clara who?

WOLFSON and SHEPHERD: Clara Eagle.

SHEPHERD: ...was our departmental chair person, and, she was a silversmith, metalsmith.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: And, she, she was just a wonderful person.

WOLFSON: She worked...

SHEPHERD: Tough but fair.

WOLFSON: She worked a sixteen hour day, and she expected everybody else to, too.
[Wolfson laughs]

SHEPHERD: Well, she, that was the kind of person she was.

WOLFSON: Yeah, she was an administrator.

SHEPHERD: If you were working hard for her, she would respond.

WOLFSON: She was great.

SHEPHERD: And, she was a very, very good personal steward of people. I can remember my first big committee assignments on campus, leading promotion and places like that. She took me aside and said, "Fred, this is what you've got to do to prepare for these meetings." And she, she had it all covered. She was a great administrator. She really was, and a pleasure to work for. They have a beautiful portrait of her up in the sixth floor outside her gallery, named for her. She was a real fast car driver, though. **[Shepherd laughs]** Wasn't she Emily? **[Shepherd laughs]** She had that big old Chrysler, and she'd get in that thing, and man, she'd put it to the floor.

WOLFSON: She was a character.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, she was.

WILLIHNGANZ: **[Willihnganz laughs]** So, you...she was part of the Guild?

SHEPHERD: Yes.

WOLFSON: She was part of the organizers of the Guild. I think we said, it really got started by Virginia Minish, who thought there ought to be something for Kentuckians to see, and she found somebody, I can't think of his name – McNeil, I think or something - in Louisville who had something to do with the railroads and talked him into giving use these two cars to do an art train. And then, so, then all, and all the people that cooperated with it mostly, were art administrators in one college or another or in a high

school, or were artist craftsmen themselves. And there was just a whole bunch of them, and they thought this was a good idea, too.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, it was. I can remember having it come to Murray. I had worked on it, as all we did, all of us did. And, Jerry Workman, was...

WOLFSON: Yeah, was the train director then.

SHEPHERD: ...was the director, and of course, he now has that big gallery in, Berea.

WOLFSON: Now. Yeah.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, big weaver.

WOLFSON: But, that was, that was extraordinary – outfitting one car to be a gallery for a whole year to go around....

SHEPHERD: That was a rough assignment, I must say. ***[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]***

WOLFSON: And, and she, Virginia did it. She supervised making that so you could take the stands that things stood on, and convert them underneath into compartments to store them in when the train was on the road.

WILLIHNGANZ: Pretty good.

WOLFSON: And then get them out again. The director had to get them out again at the next place, and the people, members who were at that place, had to round up, help them round up electricity and water, and whatever they needed, utilities, and make schedule for people to come to visit, ***[Wolfson laughs]*** be host and hostess.

SHEPHERD: It was down in the old spurr and Murray, down by the agricultural cooler where they have ...

WOLFSON: Where we don't have anything now.

SHEPHERD: Well, there isn't a train station there now. It's not used. I guess the last surviving, member over there was Railroad Express was run out of there.

WOLFSON: It might have been, and then Playhouse in the Park took the, ***[Wolfson laughs]*** took the railroad station and moved it out to the park.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, they did. Yep.

WOLFSON: Anyway, that's beside the point.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, Fred, did you make a lot of friends and a lot of new acquaintances through the Guild?

SHEPHERD: Oh, yeah, sure, sure. I mean uh...

WOLFSON: You remember...

SHEPHERD: ...you knew every...

WOLFSON: ...Smith Ross and his wife?

SHEPHERD: Who?

WOLFSON: Smith Ross and

SHEPHERD: Yes, Smith Ross.

WOLFSON: ...from down near...

SHEPHERD: There's just a whole...I was looking through a, booth display list last night, and at the sixty, or the seventy-seventh fair, there were something like almost eighty booths there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

SHEPHERD: That's a lot in a very short...in a very short period of time.

WOLFSON: That's a lot, yes.

SHEPHERD: And that's with tents and the whole thing, and the lists of people there are, is absolutely incredible from all over Kentucky, western Kentucky, including Bill, Phil Phillips, the great leather person.

WOLFSON: That's right.

SHEPHERD: Oh, it was just marvelous.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: And they had forges there - a man from the Otooka Forge.

WOLFSON: Oh, really?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, remember that? Yeah, but there was all kinds of crafts there, and of very good quality. We were talking before about Standards, which has changed so

many times and so many ways. **[Wolfson laughs]** I mean, every year there was a meeting about Standards Committee.

WOLFSON: Yeah, that's right.

SHEPHERD: And uh, trying to keep the level of work high in the gallery...

WOLFSON: And still get as many people in as you could.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, and at the same time reach that kind of friendly level, but still with a critical eye. That's always been a problem. Always been a problem.

WOLFSON: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Even in the mornings of the fairs, I don't know if they do it anymore, they go around...

WOLFSON: They go around and check.

SHEPHERD: They go around and they grade the booths...

WOLFSON: And if you hadn't come up with the same thing that you submitted...

SHEPHERD: Exactly, exactly.

WOLFSON: ...for the jury...yeah.

SHEPHERD: You couldn't sneak stuff in that was not juried.

WILLIHNGANZ: You mean every piece has to be juried?

WOLFSON: No.

SHEPHERD: No, like if you were in ceramics and weaving, that's all you could pull in there. You're not going to pull in something else.

WOLFSON: You couldn't pull in all your drawings and paintings and stuff.

SHEPHERD: **[Shepherd laughs]** Yeah. Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ohhh.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, so, that was part of, part of the, overseeing everything, and then that morning the Guild committee would go around, the Standards Committee, and they would award...

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, they would award prizes to the first five...

WOLFSON: When did we start doing that?

SHEPHERD: I guess about the first five people...

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: That, that had outstanding booths.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: So, there was a little, a little nice refreshing ...

WOLFSON: Little competition, yeah...

SHEPHERD: ...thing at the end saying, you know, "These three booths are just wonderful, and are an example of what the Guild really wants out of the overall look of the show and the quality of the pieces that are in the show." And I think Phil was in that list.

WOLFSON: I'm sure he was.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, he was.

WOLFSON: We should have been, but it was before the list, I think.

SHEPHERD: Mm-hmm.

WOLFSON: Bob Falwell and I had a thing together.

SHEPHERD: Yeah!

WOLFSON: Because I had the weaving, and he had the woodwork. ***[Wolfson laughs]***
That was a good combination.

SHEPHERD: It was. It was.

WOLFSON: And I think that was before they started, I think the awards were a good thing, though.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, they were.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, the awards, how did the awards work?

SHEPHERD: Well, they were just given, given to the five back then, I don't know if they do the same or not...

WILLIHNGANZ: The five best booths?

SHEPHERD: Best five booths, yeah, and I've forgotten what they was...

WOLFSON: Exemplary booths. They were...

SHEPHERD: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did they do this at the start?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, right before the fair opens, that morning. The committee would go around and, you know, they'd say, "Man, you really ought to see this. This is really fantastic. You might want to take a look at it." And, I think it inspired other people...

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: ...to raise level of work when they saw some of the things that were brought into there, and, I think that's part of the whole...

WOLFSON: And you arranged one of the booths, too.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. It's part of the whole, encouraging aspect of the Guild is that every year it seems to get better, and better, and better, and because the thing is now – most of these people back then didn't even have a Kentucky State Sales Tax number, you know, **[Wolfson laughs]** they didn't.

WOLFSON: I didn't.

SHEPHERD: You had a, you had a little sales slip which you filled it out with the tax. And at the end of the fair, you went up and paid the tax up at the booth.

WOLFSON: And the Guild paid it all in.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. And, of course, now, everybody is either incorporated or they are in business for themselves, and they are much more organized than they were back then. Yeah. **[Wolfson laughs]** Keeping track of the money was a difficult thing back then. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, when they paid for individual things that they bought at a booth, they paid the craftsman, did they not?

SHEPHERD: Yes.

WOLFSON: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Checks or cash or whatever. That was before the advent of credit cards. Now, that's going back some, Emily.

WOLFSON: That is going back. **[Shepherd laughs]** That is going back. Yeah.

SHEPHERD: They didn't have credit cards at that first, first couple of fairs.

WOLFSON: No, and I, I don't think I ever had one. No.

SHEPHERD: Well, yeah. No, then, then the more enterprising people had the credit card machines and that broke the, broke the spell. Then everybody wanted to add more to the operation. So, but in the beginning it was, you know, almost odd man out – swapping you this for this. **[Shepherd laughs]**

WOLFSON: Like the Farmer's Market wasn't it?

SHEPHERD: Yes, it was. Yeah, it was. No, the business acumen wasn't real high there.

WOLFSON: No experience. No experience. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, that's one of the first things you started training, isn't it?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I think so.

WILLIHNGANZ: Business things?

SHEPHERD: We often discussed during the years over at school, at Murray State, that one of the things that was missing from our curriculum in the Art Department, was some link with the business people, so that those persons who wanted to go into business for themselves, selling their work, would have a decent background in, basic business sense. We tried for years to do that, but...

WOLFSON: It's hard.

SHEPHERD: ...they wouldn't come across. One of the problems was that the accreditation, school accreditation thing doesn't really allow you that much latitude within the core programming for the arts. But, I think it's something that's coming, and if people would just press for it – It just makes sense. It just makes sense. I mean, you've made all this work, and what are you going to do? You're not going to be an Emily Dickinson and stick it you drawer and hope somebody finds it. But, it's also kind of an antithesis, because here you are teaching all these kids, in my instance and Emily's instance, weaving and in this case, ceramics...

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: ...teaching them basic skills, which involved the materials, organization of materials producing art work, and then, what do you do after that? You can't make a living going to, **[Wolfson laughs]** professional exhibits.

WOLFSON: No.

SHEPHERD: Rarely do you ever sell a piece out of a professional exhibit, unless it's a purchase, but you couldn't make a living out of that. So, sooner or later, it will at some point, trickle down into the senses somewhere saying, you know, this would be a lot better for our kids if they went out of here with a really sound background in how to set up a business plan and how to go get money, how to organize, the whole thing – real estate, machinery, equipment, all that kind of stuff that we do now. Everyone of us that runs a small business now, you know, has a link to the Kentucky financial people.

WOLFSON: Arts Council.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, we all have – you report quarterly, and whatever. It's not very complicated, but it's a nice system that works well, but the kids are not aware of that.

WOLFSON: You, just remind me – you didn't bring your pot in here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, at some point we do need to look at whatever pot you brought. I'd like talk about your history a little bit. But we started out talking about the Guild. I thought maybe we'd deal with more of what the Guild things.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, but I think that was the one thing that the Guild presented that universities...

WOLFSON: Didn't. Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: ...lacked. They lacked that particular addition to, especially for craft persons.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: They still do.

WOLFSON: They still do.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. **[Shepherd laughs]** They still do, except, of course, Berea College which is, way ahead of the game in terms of their...

WOLFSON: Well, they have been for a long time. **[Wolfson laughs]**

SHEPHERD: For a long time. It's written into their program.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I took a sixteen week certification program in film making, and I was talking with my wife about the curriculum, and whether that program which was done in Lexington could be transferred to U of L, and she said, "Well, no, because the universities can't do certification programs. They're not allowed to do those. That's the junior colleges. They own that turf".

SHEPHERD: Mm-hmm. How about that.

WOLFSON: I didn't know that.

SHEPHERD: I didn't know that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, you get into things like this, and yeah, schools are hesitant to teach, you know, basic skill things, which is kind of interesting to me.

SHEPHERD: Well, I always thought that, you know, money management, and knowing something about it, there ought to be somewhere in the curriculum for any student – whether a nursing student, or an art student, or a geology student, or a physics student to have some basic instruction in...

WOLFSON: Well, when you were growing up, when you were going to college, you didn't have anything like that, did you?

SHEPHERD: No, not at all.

WOLFSON: And I didn't. I was taking art – becoming an artist, but how was I going to do it? I don't know. ***[Wolfson laughs]***

SHEPHERD: They still have the same problem.

WOLFSON: Yeah, and...

SHEPHERD: They still have the same problem.

WOLFSON: ...and, well, you know, you can go up and down the Mississippi River and sell your stuff, and sell yourself to do wall panels, and things like that... Yeah. ***[Wolfson laughs]***

SHEPHERD: Well, now many, many of the persons now, have become very smart, and they operate over the Internet...

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

SHEPHERD: Which is a wonderful way to go, because it bypasses the galleries which charge sixty percent of your life for putting their work in ...**[Wolfson laughs]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Really?

SHEPHERD: Oh, yeah, sixty/forty in a lot of....

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

SHEPHERD: ...and that is, you know, almost criminal, **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** but anyway, that's why the Internet has really paid off for most, most, I have a lot of friends that are on that, do that with all of their work, and they do very well. So, that bypassed that, that...

WOLFSON: Do you, do you still have to pay you tax if you do that?

SHEPHERD: Yep.

WOLFSON: You still have to your tax number?

SHEPHERD: Yes.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: Yes. Yes. Everybody has a tax number.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, Fred, are you still active with the Guild? Do you...

SHEPHERD: No, not now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Not now.

SHEPHERD: No, when I retired from school, in '99, I started in '63, fall of '63 to the spring of '99. I went back to my shop, and, which I had already added the gallery on in anticipation of retirement so I could go back to work. Teaching is, is not full time artistry.

WOLFSON: It's time consuming.

SHEPHERD: Teaching is, teaching is, is, a challenge, and every year, you try to do it better than you did it the year before, not to mention the fact that you were, back when I

was there you were completely responsible for building practically ninety percent of the equipment that you had – kilns and whatever.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: Now it's a little bit different, but, the one good thing about it is that you learn the craft from the bottom up. **[All laugh]** You really did.

WOLFSON: You really did.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, you did. Yeah.

WOLFSON: And it's, and it's great to have students. That's, that's, you know...

SHEPHERD: Plus students are wonderful.

WOLFSON: Yeah, I've got a pot by one of your students. You saw it in there.

SHEPHERD: Do you?

WOLFSON: Mary Jane's.

SHEPHERD: Oh, Mary Jane! I love Mary Jane.

WOLFSON: Go bring it in and show it to us.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, she's the eternal student.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: She's wonderful.

WOLFSON: She is.

SHEPHERD: Aaa, she's a good person.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, is she involved with the Guild?

WOLFSON: No, she's...

SHEPHERD: No, she's involved with the, the Pritchard Committee.

WOLFSON: Oh, the Pritchard Committee, yeah.

SHEPHERD: Mm-hmm. Yeah, she is our representative, field representative for Murray, for the Pritchard Committee, the education committee for the state. My very

close...a good friend of mine, Bob Sexton, Dr. Bob Sexton is the...runs the Pritchard Committee. And he is, he's just a wonderful person. He's just incredible. If they searched high and low, they could not find anybody better than Bob Sexton.

WOLFSON: They were just plain lucky.

SHEPHERD: No, he's, he's a, not only very bright, but he's on top of the game in terms of trying to improve education in Kentucky, and he's, he's a great person. He really is.

WILLIHNGANZ: Has the Guild grown mostly through students coming in?

SHEPHERD: That was always one of my big complaints.

WOLFSON: I don't think so.

SHEPHERD: No.

WOLFSON: There were students, Homer, Homer Allen that I knew joined, and, and Bob Falwell was a student, I think, when he joined, and there've been some, but not a lot.

SHEPHERD: Not a lot of, of, one of the reasons was that, is that they had to, to enter the Guild. They had to have work that they had not made in their educational institution. In other words, they had to display work that was removed from that, which presented problems for the kids.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: Because, that's all they had left. I mean that's what they had when they graduated.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: I always wanted a student wing of the, of the Guild, but it never did shape. The whole idea was – here you're training all these kids,...

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: ...but you're not going that extra mile to incorporate them in the organization which is just going to make it better, and could never make it happen.

WOLFSON: And even when we had an education director, we didn't do that.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. Yeah. I always thought that was kind of antithetical. Here you're training people to do something, then, but you won't let them do it the next day. **[All**

laugh] That's for professionals. Yeah. We've got this very strange dichotomy there, but uh, I don't know if that'll ever change.

WOLFSON: Well, if, human beings just get so involved in their own interest that they don't always, they just don't...

SHEPHERD: That's true. Well, we had a different prospective, because we both were teachers, so...

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: ...we ran into the dilemma daily. Where as persons who were independent craftsmen were not presented with that problem, and didn't really understand it.

WOLFSON: Well, I'm not sure I understood it either, completely. ***[Wolfson laughs]***

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, it seems like over the years, a lot of the leadership for the Guild has been educators and administrators.

SHEPHERD: That's true. That's true. That's true. And a lot of business people, too, are attracted to the Guild and participate.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: Uh, I think, one of my board members, a man by the name of Ed Dienes.

WOLFSON: Oh, yes.

SHEPHERD: ...was a craftsman, but he was also an executive type, and he brought, he brought a lot of those skills to bear in discussions about where the Guild should go and what it should do. I always remember him, as well as Nancy Comstock.

WOLFSON: Oh, yes. Yeah, but I didn't get to know her.

SHEPHERD: Ah, well, she made those beautiful handmade flowers.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: And I don't think I had seen another one until I saw a thing made on Martha's Living. Of course, Nancy had been making those things for almost forty years.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: They're beautiful things. She's marvelous, and I haven't seen her in thirty years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did these people influence you, Fred, in terms of the development of your craft?

SHEPHERD: No, not at all. Not at all,

WOLFSON: All they do is spark a little more energy.

SHEPHERD: I think what, there's a camaraderie, I mean, that I knew, or how like when I knew some of the people there, and I knew those things, and we would see each other periodically, and those influences, maybe, are felt in different ways, but they're there. They're there. But you're always influenced by practically everything you see.

WOLFSON: Sure. ***[Wolfson laughs]***

SHEPHERD: So... the nice thing about being in a studio by yourself is that you get to focus every day on something that you're working on. And, even though you don't think that the answers are coming, they come automatically. And most people...I work in series of things, like if you're going to make two dozen teapots. You start out with one thing and by the end...it's like somebody whispering the stories, ***[Willihnganz laughs]*** story in your ear...

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: ...the twentieth piece comes out with something completely different. And that's the way the work goes, because each piece spawns another piece, spawns another piece...spawns another piece. Then it goes full circle. It can inter...there's an interplay between the designing and the building of everything. So, it's never dull. It's never dull. ***[Wolfson laughs]*** There's something going on in the shop all the time, if you're smart enough to stumble over it. Sometimes you'll get pieces. I used to tell my kids, you'll make a piece, and you don't know how or what is behind that piece. You really like that piece, you know. You're just in love with it, but for some reason, you don't understand it.

WOLFSON: How'd I get there? ***[Wolfson laughs]***

SHEPHERD: Yeah, how'd I do that?

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you find it's kind of isolating to be working alone in you shop?

SHEPHERD: No, no, I love isolation. I just love it. I love it. ***[Wolfson laughs]*** After being surrounded by that stuff for thirty-six years, being offered a little silence, and I just love it. I have videos that go on in the thing. I have four or five favorite video, movies that are on there. I don't look them, because I've already memorized the lines being said, ***[Wolfson laughs]*** and I know what's going there, but it's just kind of a comforting noise like music. It's the same thing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, you've really caught my interest, because I'm fascinated with movies, of course. What are these five movies that you play? **[Willihnganz laughs]**

SHEPHERD: Oh, no, you wouldn't like them on. **[All laugh]**

WILLIHNGANZ: You're sure?

SHEPHERD: Oh, yeah. Oh, one of my favorites is, *Seven*. The movie, *Seven*, about the seven deadly sins.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, yes.

SHEPHERD: It's a wonderful movie, rather raw, but...

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, yeah, it is a bit raw.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, it's raw, but it's a dandy.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Now, do you go off to shows on a regular basis?

SHEPHERD: No, I don't do it anymore.

WILLIHNGANZ: You don't do shows at all? You just have people come to your studio?

SHEPHERD: No, I open it once a year, at Christmas time.

WOLFSON: He won't, he won't even agree to let you come out there except when he's ready to open it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Once a year...

SHEPHERD: Once a year..

WILLIHNGANZ: At Christmas?

SHEPHERD: ...For three days.

WILLIHNGANZ: For three days. **[Willihnganz laughs]**

SHEPHERD: That's all I can stand. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** Emily comes. It takes all year to...

WOLFSON: Get things where you want them.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, digest it, then it all has to be painted, and you know, last week the front steps fell off, and I had to redo those. ***[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]*** It's always something...the joys of home ownership, or studio ownership. There's always something to repair. Yeah, and now we're in the middle of a drought, so, yeah, I'm hauling water from in the city, not through the county.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, how many people do you let come during these three days?

SHEPHERD: Oh, anybody can come.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh.

WOLFSON: He even, he even lets, lets you have a little notice.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I put it in the paper.

WOLFSON: He mails you a postcard and puts it in the paper.

SHEPHERD: Put it in the paper.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh-huh.

WOLFSON: I think you have a postcard, too, don't you?

SHEPHERD: No, Wayne puts out postcards.

WOLFSON: Wayne does that, yeah. Wayne does.

WILLIHNGANZ: Then do you hire a sales staff or do you handle it all yourself?

SHEPHERD: I do it all – wrap it and sell it, wrap it and sell it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

SHEPHERD: And it's wonderful to see the people.

WOLFSON: It works out.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I have and it gives me enough money to go on for another year.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

SHEPHERD: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's terrific that you can sell that many.

SHEPHERD: It's not complicated, it's just a way of doing things. Once in awhile I still send to shows, things like that, the Appalachian, Gwen Heffner...

WOLFSON: Yes.

SHEPHERD: ...Who runs the, who runs the design and the, she writes me for pieces once in awhile.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I, Gwen wrote me for pieces for that Kentucky, the Best of Kentucky **[unintelligible]**

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: ...But I had just sold everything out at Christmas, all the really nice pieces, all the plates, and all...

WOLFSON: All that you wanted to have people call yours.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. Yeah. It was all gone. So, I just wrote her back saying, "Gwen, the goodies are gone." **[Shepherd laughs]** And I take off January and February.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, you don't do any work in your shop at all?

SHEPHERD: No, cut wood – don't want to do it in January and February. **[Wolfson laughs]**

WILLIHNGANZ: I don't even know what you do. Tell me what you do.

SHEPHERD: I'm a potter.

WILLIHNGANZ: You're a potter.

WOLFSON: Bring that pot in now.

SHEPHERD: For a, ceramicist, they say.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I'll take a look at your pot. A ceramicist?

SHEPHERD: Potter. Potter.

WOLFSON: Yeah. He's really a potter.

SHEPHERD: All those fancy words like ceramicists...

WOLFSON: He does ceramics, but he's really a potter. He makes these wonderful big pieces, but I have a small one of yours that's nice, too.

SHEPHERD: You have a small one?

WOLFSON: Yeah, that somebody bought for me.

SHEPHERD: One of the pieces I brought was...the Goldsteins came down to my shop...

WOLFSON: How nice.

SHEPHERD: They were on their anniversary, and they stopped by. Dr. Steven and Susan, and they're great. I've been to their house. They're just, they're the nicest people you'd ever want to meet. Well, they wanted, they picked out this teapot...

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: ...and I thought she was going to be here today. Well, three years later, I'm - Steve says, "Send it to us when you get tired of it." **[Wolfson laughs]** So, I'm now tired of it.

WOLFSON: You thought maybe he could take it back.

SHEPHERD: And I never sent it. It's in the box. I brought it so you could see.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, super.

SHEPHERD: It's a, it's a copper red production with a special handle.

WOLFSON: I'll let you get it.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I'll get it. The handle's a nice piece of engineering. **[Wolfson laughs]**

[While Shepherd goes to get the teapot -]

WOLFSON: Do you want some of this stuff out of your way?

SHEPHERD: Well, it's, it's, that sounds kind of more interesting.

WOLFSON: It's all interesting.

SHEPHERD: It's part of a series of teapots that were done with ovals, and once you do, have an oval design on, it changes all of the aspects. It changes the way, you have to come up with a system to support the lids. You have to have lids that fit those kinds

of things, and spouts, and an array of handles and spouts that match in the design, and the glaze has to emphasize the things that you're working with those, too. And the handles were all new. These were all new.

WOLFSON: That's lovely.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. That handle took more time to make than the piece.

WOLFSON: I bet they do.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, each one of these things. These have to be drilled off first.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh. Sure.

SHEPHERD: Then there's a piece of wood in the middle, and then the wood is notched, and then pieces of brass go through each one. The trick is to get it to line up straight, and then they're bent over and then folded over.

WOLFSON: Oh, gosh.

SHEPHERD: Yeah.

WOLFSON: Well, you know, I can't see it very well. You know I can't see.

SHEPHERD: *[unintelligible]* *[Shepherd laughs]*

WOLFSON: No, I mean I really can't.

SHEPHERD: Oh.

WOLFSON: I have that macular degeneration disease.

SHEPHERD: Oh, my goodness.

WOLFSON: So, I can see around the edges. I can see you if I look this way.

SHEPHERD: Oh, good.

WOLFSON: And I can see him if I look that way. *[Wolfson laughs]*

SHEPHERD: So, that's the piece I'm now tired of. *[Willihnganz laughs]* So, I'm going to send that to...

WOLFSON: Well, you got new ones going.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, I'm sending that to Dr. Steven and Susan for their anniversary. They don't know it yet, but ...

WILLIHNGANZ: I won't tell.

SHEPHERD: ...it's finally coming. They wanted it three years ago, *[Wolfson laughs]* but now they're going to get it.

WILLIHNGANZ: When is their anniversary?

SHEPHERD: It's in August, the end of August.

WILLIHNGANZ: End of August, because I'm going to send her a copy of this tape. I don't want her to hear it on the tape.

SHEPHERD: Oh, gosh! *[All laugh]* It's okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'll tell her she can't watch this until September.

SHEPHERD: No charge either on this. It's a present. They've waited long enough for it, so...

WOLFSON: That's good.

SHEPHERD: She has a beautiful collection.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, I've been to her house. That's where I did, I did photographing there.

SHEPHERD: Oh, you've been to the house? Yeah, yeah, beautiful collection.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: I love them both. They're just great people. Really great people.

WILLIHNGANZ: She has so much stuff...they have so much stuff in their house. It's amazing.

SHEPHERD: Then the boys are doing well. She said, I said, "Well, how are the kids doing?" She said, " Oh, they're doing well. They're doing..."

WOLFSON: Well, she's got, she's got so much energy, and she, she works so hard. She, she put on all those shows for the Guild, you know. Did you ever exhibit in any of those that they had around here?

SHEPHERD: She asked me to jury that, the, Lexington Artist and Craftsmen.

WOLFSON: Yeah

SHEPHERD: That was, that's an all day job.

WOLFSON: I'll bet it was.

SHEPHERD: There were, we started at nine o'clock jurying the stuff for that show, and there were six carousels full of stuff.

WOLFSON: My goodness.

SHEPHERD: Took from nine o'clock in the morning 'til five o'clock in the afternoon to jury the entries for that show. That's the longest jury I've ever been on. There were, I don't know, how many slides there were. They just kept coming and coming. And then I got back here, and I went to Wal-Mart, and one of the exhibit people...Have you seen these big, it's like a cut-out of a moose or something, and you put pennies in it and it goes down in there and then...

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: Well, one of those was in Wal-Mart.

WOLFSON: Oh, no!

SHEPHERD: So, quickly I called Susan. I said, "Susan,..."

WOLFSON: Take it out.

SHEPHERD: "...get that crap out of there." **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** I said, "This is a commercial venture. Take it out." She said, "Thank you, Fred." **[Wolfson laughs]** You have to watch them. I mean, you get all kinds of stuff, and once in awhile...

WILLIHNGANZ: So, they just buy something at Wal-Mart and bring it in and say, "This is my art?"

SHEPHERD: Well, no, this is a, there are people that made these collection, coin collection things.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh,huh.

SHEPHERD: That's what they were selling.

WOLFSON: Yep.

SHEPHERD: And they had wanted to get into the sale by selling these cute little giraffes, you put money in them...

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

SHEPHERD: As soon as I saw that I said, "Woo, woo, wait a minute. 'Cause you get punchy after awhile, after you have seen four thousand water colors and...**[Wolfson laughs]** I mean, it is, six or seven people sitting there looking at this stuff, you go crazy. You can't wait for lunch or for an earthquake or something, you know. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** But, it was a good experience, and I saw **[unintelligible]**, one of my students from Thailand.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh?

SHEPHERD: Does the most beautiful work you've ever seen. He gave me a piece, sent it to me in the mail.

WOLFSON: Oh, great, and that's in Louisville or Lexington?

SHEPHERD: It's in Lex..., he's in Louisville.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: And he's wonderful.

WOLFSON: That's great.

SHEPHERD: He was one of the best students I ever had. He had majored in political science at Eastern.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: And, he arrived at my doorstep uh,...

WOLFSON: How did he do....

SHEPHERD: ...shortly after Christmas for a small semester. He said, "Mr. Shepherd, " he said, "I, my name is **[unintelligible]**, and I want to do clay."

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: And he wanted to do, get a masters degree, and he was singly the most gifted person I've ever seen.

WOLFSON: That's amazing.

SHEPHERD: He was in the studio, down with four or five other people, graduate students had been in programs for four years or some, and he started out, obviously, way, way behind them.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: But it didn't take him...in six months he passed them – six months. **[Wolfson laughs]** He was just marvelous. He had this wonderful feeling for the material, and the designs were just incredible.

WILLIHNGANZ: What makes somebody good at doing this stuff?

SHEPHERD: I don't know. It's, it's, it's, it's a, some kind of a relationship with materials. That's all it is to it.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: Some people do wood or leather or drawings or, you know, I have colleagues at school that I still am just amazed by the thing they do. Have you seen Dale's typewriter drawings...

WOLFSON: Uh-uh.

SHEPHERD: ...that he did at school?

WOLFSON: No.

SHEPHERD: Judy, our secretary up in the Art Department had one on her wall.

WOLFSON: Oh, my goodness!

SHEPHERD: You would, you would not believe this thing.

WOLFSON: I would, I would love to see it. Yes.

SHEPHERD: Oh, God. It is one of those things that, it's a life experience to see one of these things. That's what art's all about.

WOLFSON: Yes, it is.

SHEPHERD: Bringing something to somebody that changes them.

WOLFSON: They would never dream.

SHEPHERD: They would never dream. They just go...

WOLFSON: See a picture of a typewriter?

SHEPHERD: It's a typewriter. *[Wolfson laughs]* An old Corona typewriter.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And what makes this so different?

SHEPHERD: And it's big. It's this big.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: But the facility and the action of this drawing is just unbelievable. You just sit in awe of this thing. It's just marvelous. Transforming the...Somebody drew that! Aww, you're kidding me. You mean that's not a photo thing that touched up or...

WILLIHNGANZ: Interesting.

SHEPHERD: I was up there in his office once. He and I taught drawing together for, oh, God, twenty-six years.

WOLFSON: Yes.

SHEPHERD: He has all these drawings he did as a student. He has drawers full of these things, stacks of them, and they're just absolutely amazing. He's an extremely gifted person, but he also works very hard.

WOLFSON: Yes, he does.

SHEPHERD: He lives for his work and the students, and that's it. Any spare time he has, he's out in a national park someplace – he and Chad Stewart, not Chad Steward, but Chad Shot, and they go out there and camp and draw. Now, he goes to Europe in the summer to teach drawing in Italy.

WOLFSON: That's good.

SHEPHERD: But he is an absolute master. He just ...

WOLFSON: And a good teacher.

SHEPHERD: Oh, yeah. He's a great guy. He's just great.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, Fred, in your work, what was the hardest thing for you to overcome to do what you've done?

SHEPHERD: I, you have to see it from the long range. You have to see it as a building process. I can remember the first teapot I ever made, back in school. And, it was hilarious. It was really funny, and if you wanted to tell somebody how to make a teapot with all the elements involved in that, not knowing anything about it and make it completely wrong, that was it. **[Wolfson laughs]** And I didn't have the **[unintelligible]** sense to keep the piece. I wish I had that piece back.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh. I bet you do.

SHEPHERD: 'Cause it was terrible. **[Shepherd laughs]** It was terrible.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: But that's, you know, that's how you get your...I remember when I was at school, I hadn't, I'd been in the Art Department. I switched my major, and the first course I took was from a wonderful teacher by the name of Martin Soria, who died at sixty-four in the Olympic skater crash in New York, when all the Olympic skaters were killed in '56. He was on his way to present a paper on Velasquez at the, excuse me, not Velasquez but, Francisco Zuberano. He was presenting a paper on that at the Prado Museum, and he died there, in that wreck.

WOLFSON: Oh, goodness.

SHEPHERD: But he was the first person I ran into as an art historian at school. And the man was just absolutely, I've never seen an art historian like him, ever. He was enthralled with the material, and one of the things that he would do with freshman was that he would put on a thing, and then he would discuss the piece and then he would say, "Well what do you think about this piece?"

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: And every once in awhile one of the students would see something that he didn't see, and that set him into orbit. **[Wolfson laughs]** He would say, "Oh, yes, yes, you're right! And he was about this tall, tight curly hair, and squeaky, black shoes. He was very formal, but he was a wonderful teacher, and he just lived for that discovery of something somebody would see that he hadn't. And it would just, it would set him off. He was the happiest creature on earth for about three weeks. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** But that's the way he taught.

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: He was wonderful. He just loved the subject matter. On the other hand they had another art historian that was a complete, complete – at the other end of the scale.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm. Just did it for...

SHEPHERD: Ah, he did it for a living, but he wasn't passionate about it. There was no fire in his belly at all, but Martin...Ohhh, ohhh.

WOLFSON: So, he...

SHEPHERD: He would sit up at night in his office. We had a janitor at Kresge Art at Michigan State – a janitor who was French. His name was George Lambrandt. Brilliant! Absolutely brilliant man. And he and Martin would hold a discourse in the evening about something. **[Wolfson laughs]** They would, last time I remember, they were talking about the plays of Luigi Pirandello, and he would sit there and argue about this. That's the way Martin was. He was passionate about everything that had anything to do with music, art, dance...

WOLFSON: So, he influenced you?

SHEPHERD: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. He drew me into art,...

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: ...and, because of, I'd never seen anybody entertain that form of logic,...

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: ... and perception, and enjoyment of something. And you sat there and said, "Oh, my God, he's right. He's right! He's right! **[Wolfson laughs]** All these other idiots don't see it. He sees it". Yeah, and the first day, I had taken drawing and things like that, but I walked down to the pot shop, and I saw a man working down there, who later became my mentor, and who just died two years, three years ago, Louis Raynor. I watched him work, and it was, it was magic.

WOLFSON: Uh-huh.

SHEPHERD: Taking these things out of here and then just making these things – out of nothing!

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: For the individual responsible for every facet, turn, every little aspect of the piece – out of nothing. Jeez, I want to do that. **[Wolfson laughs]** I want to do that. So, that's how it began. Yeah, and I think the same story could be said by many, many people the same way – where a person or a circumstance or a teacher of some kind has really turned the light on, in that way. And it's, it's been that, it's a life journey.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you think the Guild provides the opportunity for people to connect that way?

SHEPHERD: I don't know. I don't know. I think it has to do with certain individuals that have that taste. We had another teacher at school in the Philosophy Department by the name of John Taylor. Came in a grey suit every day, and he smoked cigarettes. It was like something out of a movie – a forties movie – everybody smoked cigarettes. But, Dr. Taylor taught aesthetics, and you were not allowed into that room after the time. You'd, you'd have to wait outside the door. And that place was packed. There were eighty students in there, and you could hear a pin drop. First of all, it took you two weeks to learn the language he was speaking. 'Cause he used English like no one had ever used English – lots of wonderful adjectives and descriptive phrases, but after you got that under your belt, you recognized how valuable he was. He would talk about Benedetto Croce, and Aristotle and all these people, but what's, he talked about them as if it was his point of view. He was Aristotle telling you about these things. I've never heard anybody do that. I think the closest was the great James Campbell, Campbell.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah.

SHEPHERD: He was just like Campbell. He was enthralled with ideas, and as Campbell was enthralled with the mysticism of religion and everything else.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: Just marvelous! There's not another person like him. Well, as a philosophy teacher he was, 'course the guys in his department were all, "Aaa, that's John. He's like..." But they weren't sitting in there in that classroom where he could make eighty people cry over a Robert Herrick love poem. **[Wolfson laughs]** That's the power that man had. He was wonderful. I took all three courses with him. So, those teachers, my Lou Raynor, and there were a couple of people in English that were like that. I took a lot of literature courses, too, that had that, that dedication and that spark for teaching. They could make it such a joyful experience. You couldn't wait to get there to see what was going to happen, or what question he'd ask. And you had to be ready. **[Shepherd laughs]** He'd give you this list the books, my God.

WOLFSON: Couldn't look out the window, could you?

SHEPHERD: Yeah. **[Shepherd laughs]** A student asked Campbell, a girl who was, I guess he was teaching, where'd he teach – at Vassar or...

WOLFSON: I can't remember.

SHEPHERD: ...one of those girls' schools he taught at. And one of the students saw him after class and said, "Mr. Campbell, that list of books you gave is so large. I just can't read them all."

He said, "Well, I'm surprised you tried." **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** And what he was talking about, of course, was the long termed...

WOLFSON: Yeah.

SHEPHERD: Yeah, here are the things that...

WOLFSON: That you ought to know about.

SHEPHERD: ...that what help you understand what I'm talking about and the subject matter as well. But you do run into teachers like that. I was very, very fortunate to have three or four of them. Yeah. They were wonderful. They were great, great human beings – just terrific. Yeah. Lou played a joke on me once. We went, my teacher, Lou Raynor, he took me up, trout fishing up in one of the lakes outside Traverse City. There's a small spring fed lake called Torch Lake. And it was in the spring, and the joke was, there was this turtle. And he said, "Fred, why don't you get out there and get that thing?" I said, "Okay." So, I took my shoes off, and the water must have been thirty-five degrees. It was the coldest water. **[Wolfson and Shepherd laugh.]** It was a spring fed lake. But he was a, he was a dandy. He was wonderful. He'd build his own houses. He'd build his own equipment. Much, the attitude of starting from scratch is something that I learned from him, but he was also part engineer. He really knew his stuff. He was an Alfred grad. Lou was a great teacher, but he was not a teacher who gave lectures. There was something very, very oriental about his teaching. He taught by example. Had his studio right there, anybody could come in anytime they wanted. But he didn't give big lectures on glazes or chemistry like that. He just gave you a book. He said, "Fred, here take this." **[Wolfson laughs]** It turns out to be to be an old **[unintelligible]** book which is one of the first great books to have ever been written on glazes. He said, "Read this." **[Shepherd laughs]** But all the rest of the things you did, you had to watch him. Watch what he did, whether he was building a house, or building kilns, or making pots. They were all examples to be followed, and he was an absolute expert at everyone of them. He was really, really bright, but he was very nonchalant. He was not a prideful man at all. He was just, he was a salt.

WOLFSON: Mm-hmm.

SHEPHERD: He was really a super person. His daughter sent me a picture of him in the last week of his life. I have it in my studio. Still making stuff right up until the day he died. **[Willihnganz laughs]** That's Lou. Yeah, good guy.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's a good way to live.

SHEPHERD: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Can you tell me more about the Guild or your thoughts about it?

SHEPHERD: Mmm.

WOLFSON: I think you ought to see his other big pot. Now he showed you this.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh...

SHEPHERD: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: Where's his other one?

WOLFSON: It's in the kitchen.

SHEPHERD: It's in the kitchen.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh. Hey, let me go get that, too.

SHEPHERD: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: And I'm going to switch tapes real quick.

SHEPHERD: Yeah. ***[Wolfson laughs]*** We've filled his ear with all kinds of nothing. ***[Shepherd laughs]*** Nothing that can be used.

WOLFSON: He's got a lot to select from. Let's put it that way.

WILLIHNGANZ: Think of it that way.

WOLFSON: What?

WILLIHNGANZ: Think of it that way.

SHEPHERD: Rantings and ravings...

[End of recording.]