

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Marie Hochstrasser

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Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: Recording. Probably not his jingle but, okay. I try to do these as reasonably informally as possible, and sort of an exchange of ideas, so I may make comments at various points.

HOCHSTRASSER: Very good.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, you don't have to do all the talking. Although I hope you'll do most of it. **[Laughing]** I guess the first thing I would like to get a feel for is your experience as a crafts person or artist. The, you know, the work you do and have done, and all that sort of thing.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well I don't, I didn't want to start that away. I've been a fiber artist and art educator over a number of years, and when I look at the emphasis of the kind of things I do, I also think I must be, lost is the word. A community arts advocate and developer, because I've been involved in a lot of different arts groups since I came here in 1960. So.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Okay. How did you get involved in fabric. I'm not sure what you called it.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, interestingly enough, my story goes that I made, that I wove a bath mat in 6th grade, and it was a cotton chenille in white and lavender, and my mother saved it. And I still have that, so when I go into the schools and things, I often pull this out. And I often pull out a book called Pelly's New Suit. That was a charming book from the 1930's, about a little Scandinavian boy who wants to have a new suit, and what he has to do to bring it to pass. And, people should look that up, because it's been reprinted in charming Scandinavian colors still, and it tells about how he, how he trades chores with his grandmother...both his grandmothers...his mother and the tailor, to come buy a new suit. I won't tell anymore of it. **[Laughing]**

WILLIHNGANZ: I have a story, story book, of different stories my mother bought for me the year I was born, 1946. And it's fascinating to read, because the values are so different, and it's shocking. There is some racism in it. There's a girl finding her courage by going into a deserted, unfinished house, which is not a safety thing we would encourage today. There is a lot of things; it's just kind of interesting to look at how stories have changed for children over the years.

HOCHSTRASSER: Oh, right. Well, this one has turned into a classic, and I have given it to my children and my grandchildren, and I now have a great grandchild. **[Laughing]**

WILLIHNGANZ: That's wonderful. Wow, that's terrific. Where did you get training for doing the work that you've done?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well. What happened to me was, I was going to college in New England, and I had changed my major three times. And, a girl in my class said,

"I'm moving back West, and I'm going to go to the California College of Arts and Crafts this summer. And how would you like coming out and staying with me, and we will go together". And I took weaving and pottery, and when you leave college in the middle of the year, your parents always say to you, "What do you have planned for fall? Wouldn't you like to put your transcript in some place?" So, I sent it to UCLA, and I moved onto UCLA, and took beginning design and craft classes as an upper division student at that time.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What drew you to this particular area?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, now that you mention it, it's interesting that I grew up with some old family houses near where I grew up. And, one of my ancient aunts had a spinning wheel that had been in the family from the earlier generation. And, we were asked to go around the house and ask what we would like. And I choose this flax wheel with a lovely kind of bush, that's a natural feature of it, that was all in great condition, from probably the 1850's to `80's. And, interestingly enough, an aunt of mine saved it for me for many years. And told me when it was available, and I took it West.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

HOCHSTRASSER: So.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's exciting.

HOCHSTRASSER: Yeah. I think, I really started weaving in 1947, and I was right at that point where many men were coming home from the service and looking for lots of kinds of alternative careers. And, I think I just flowed along with that group, because there were many returning veterans. We were all a part of that earliest craft movement in the United States that developed after the Second World War.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. How much of your time and energy have you been able to devote to your work? Are you a full time weaver or part time weaver?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well that's a good, that's a marvelous question. I'm not a full time weaver, but I must be a full time fiber devotee, because my day is most interesting to me, when its involved in something that relates to fiber, or planning something in terms of fiber for children or adults, or teaching in other settings.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you received recognition, or patronage, or awards over the years?

HOCHSTRASSER: One of the things that influenced me a great deal was the fact that when I was young, a young mother living in Eugene, Oregon, I sent a piece into the young American's Expedition in New York City. It was at America House, it was juried for artists under 30 years old. And, I won the second prize in fiber for a piece that was citron, avocado, natural linen in a crack weaves. Back in that era you did three

yard links. And I...it was kind of a turning point in my life, because I was, as I said, I was under 30. And I said, oh well, maybe I don't really want to be competing all the time. Maybe I just want to do it, and it has influenced my whole life, I think, because I felt like I had received recognition for the design and the esthetic of it in a way that was very satisfying to me.

WILLIHNGANZ: So when you weave, do you think of this as a hobby? Do you think of this as a passion, that you are trying to create art works, or how do you conceive of the work?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well I've always thought of it as individual art work, but I do, I do, I love the designing. I love the process. And, I don't do it all the time, which is very contrary to most artists, I realize, but I get a deal of satisfaction with working with people, I think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Do you consider yourself a success?

HOCHSTRASSER: Oh, what an interesting point. Well, as a matter of fact, yes I do. I've had tremendous satisfaction by a couple of awards I've received in the last two years. I was honored by the Kentucky Craft Marketing with the Emeritus Status, a couple of years ago, and I also have received the Tenth Annual Rude Osolnik Award. Rude was a woodworker who started the woodworking program at Berea College many years ago. And, when he passed away about ten years ago, they honored him with a special award. And, I feel like I received it for my forty-something years of, lets see, preservation and development of awareness of Kentucky Ccraft, and just helping a lot of other people develop their talents, and enjoy the medium, and just enjoy being a part of that network.

WILLIHNGANZ: What's been the hardest thing for you to overcome as you've mastered your craft?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well. I think most people would laugh, but I might say shyness. And I think that most people would not believe that, but it's true.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is there a great deal of dealing with people involved in weaving?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, there's a great deal in dealing with people, because when I first came I taught art at Transylvania College for four years. I taught Art Ed at the University of Kentucky for ten years in the `70's. And, I've put myself out in the public because of my interest, and I serve on the board of the Museum of Art and Craft in Louisville, and am quite active with that mission.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What, of all the things that you've created, what's the thing that you've been proudest of?

HOCHSTRASSER: Proudest of? Of all the things that I've created, well, I would diverge and say three daughters. I know that sounds funny, but they're wonderfully happy and successful in their fields today. In terms of art work, I particularly enjoyed doing an appliqué collage fiber piece, when we went off on a sabbatical to California many years ago, and I made the piece out of all sorts of remnants from the things I had sewn for our family at that time. And, it was called Golden Horizon's, because it was always pretty exciting for us to go back to California for a visit.

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's talk a little about the Kentucky Guild of Arts and...Is it of Artist and Crafts?

HOCHSTRASSER: It is Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, and I had the interesting opportunity of being a brand new faculty member of Transylvania College in the fall of 1960, and I received a letter from Governor Bert Combs, inviting me to join a newly forming Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. And he had sent the letter to all the art faculty from around the state. And the Kentucky Economic Development Division had been trying to help Kentucky artists, and they felt that this might be a stronger way to move ahead with them. And they incorporated, I think, in early 1961...and shall I tell my little story?

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

HOCHSTRASSER: And it, it was interesting for us because I had arrived here with a new husband that I had...we had met in Oregon. And he was a Kentuckian, an anthropologist and we...he was doing his field work for his PHD in Springfield, Kentucky, and we were living on an NSF grant, which our total income, back in that year was \$300 a month. And, to give it some perspective, the rent was \$100 and the utilities and the food sort of took care of it all. So, when I finally found the \$10 to join, they had incorporated. And, when I received my certificate of membership, a pen had crossed out charter member. But, I do feel like I started at the ground floor with the Kentucky Guild. And I've been a very strong advocate of it every since. I believe that if Kentucky artists thought it was important to them to belong to a professional group that was our own, it would enhance their standing in the public. And, I know the public looks to us with our track record of fairs and things, as people who have a greater excellence in developing craft. In whatever medium you are working with.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, at what levels have you been involved with the Guild?

HOCHSTRASSER: I have served on the board on various occasions; I served as president for three separate years, '74, '75, and '76, at a time when we were really flourishing. Several things were going on at that time. We had received a national endowment for the arts grant, to do a tri-fold on presenting architects and designers with the opportunity of using the Kentucky craftsmen's talents on special commissions that, that they might have. And, it was a very successful entrée onto us reaching out and working with business. We had a national endowment grant to bring international artists to Kentucky when we hosted the American Crafts Council Southeast Region in

Kentucky, in 1978. And the famous potter, Bernard Leech's son, came as the potter. A Polish tapestry weaver, Yolanda Okechuku came, and a back strap weaver, Miguel Mondragon from Ecuador as well, and it was a very exciting time. So, we have played a very big role in the American Crafts Council Southeast Region, which happened to of started the same year as our Guild. In the fall of 1960, when I had been here about three months, I read a little clip in the paper that said that they were organizing the American Crafts Council Southeast Region, because the New York office was no longer going to be able to support any regional groups. Then I rallied my husband, and told him to invite his parents to Gatlinburg, because we were going down to an organizational meeting. And it was, at that time, that several Kentucky people, Rude Osolnik, Helen McIntosh, Opal Bronson, Sally from the Signature Shop in Atlanta, several people from Athens, Georgia, all got together, and decided, yes, we weren't going to fold. We were going to have a group of the Southeast Region. And, we have worked very symbiotically with that group, to help Kentuckians develop greater regional acknowledgement. And, we have an exhibition that is called Spot Light 2007, which people in the eleven Southeastern States can contribute to, and it has been a very strong development for our Guild, as well as the region. And, we have hosted it in Lexington in 1984, in Louisville in 1986, and again in Louisville in 2006. So, and I might add, that I have been secretary of that group for 25 years, and stepped down last spring.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

HOCHSTRASSER: That's a volunteer job. Yep.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's a long volunteer job. **[Laughing]** Good job. I take it then, that you have made a lot of friends and acquaintances over the years through these.

HOCHSTRASSER: I have a wonderful circle of friends in, in the arts and fiber, all around the country, true.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is fiber a fairly close knit group of people?

HOCHSTRASSER: That's an interesting question. There's so many facets of it. So many areas that people have moved into. Back in the early days if we were...Jerry did it. I noticed we're listed as stitchery or weaving. Now people call themselves fiber artists. That might mean they are a quilt maker, a dyer, a felter...there are all sorts of avenues. Basket maker.

WILLIHNGANZ: What is a felter?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, using raw fleece from sheep, and felting it and dyeing it, and developing wall pieces or three dimensional art works. Good question.

WILLIHNGANZ: Interesting. Very interesting stuff. Are you still pretty active with the Guild?

HOCHSTRASSER: I have, in some ways, moved on to being very active in the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Louisville, and I have wound down some of my activities. I have served as the Kentucky representative to the National Hand Weavers group, on two occasions for several years each. And, I'm trying to concentrate on learning how to be more technically able to share my work with people. Visually by digital devices.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you live in Louisville?

HOCHSTRASSER: No, I live in Lexington.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

HOCHSTRASSER: And I commute over to board meetings and education committee meetings, and I'm on the curatorial committee there, too.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, that's quite a responsibility.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well. It is another interesting group of people.

WILLIHNGANZ: Historically speaking, how important would you say that the Guild has been, by comparison with other organizations in the arts and crafts promotion field in Kentucky?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well. I was looking forward to it being very strong, because my background makes me familiar with the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen. It started in 1929. And, I used to spend summers camping in different parts of New Hampshire, visiting cousins and things, and their League is now celebrating their seventy-fifth anniversary. And, they do a very strong fair at Lake Sunapee each summer. And my vision was, that our Kentucky Guild could bring to Kentucky the kind of awareness that New Hampshire has been able to bring to their craftsman, and the kind of backing that has just phenomenal cooperate support. And I...those are the directions I think we need to work on.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you see the Guild as primarily an educational venue, or is it more oriented toward marketing the works of people, and encouraging them to?

HOCHSTRASSER: I think the biggest picture which some people don't necessarily want to look at is education, because we need to give opportunities to our children to have these experiences. You meet very successful people in all walks of life, who said there was a sixth grade teacher who taught me how to use clay, and it changed my life. And, I think those opportunities are equally as important as the marketing. But, you need to do the marketing to help everybody gain that ability to stay in the field that they want to live. My decision very early was, I couldn't make a total

living at being a hand weaver, because I wasn't going to make multiple copies of anything I did.

WILLIHNGANZ: Has there been any competition for resources and recognition among the various organizations that support artistic and crafts work?

HOCHSTRASSER: I haven't looked at it that way. I do know we have an incredible resource in the Kentucky Arts Council and Kentucky Craft Marketing. And they have always been enthusiastic and supportive in the kinds of things we've thought up, and I've never been aware of us trying to compete with some other group that you couldn't, who couldn't receive it if we did.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now the Guild actually started with some ideas and some backing from the state government.

HOCHSTRASSER: True.

WILLIHNGANZ: And from the railroads to do the, the...

HOCHSTRASSER: L & N, right.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...train, and that went on for about I think six or eight years. But then, that would have been before you were president.

HOCHSTRASSER: Oh yes, it was. Really I, I did...I was a member during the era of the, of the train, and I did visit it. And, it was quite delightful, because it was a large railroad car, in which they had a gallery in one half of it. And then, they had a workshop in the other half of it, and it was a marvelous educational tool for, for people in small towns, being introduced to excellence in the different media.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, why do you think the government kind of stepped back from that and withdrew support for it?

HOCHSTRASSER: Oh, I didn't think they did. I thought...I didn't, I didn't know the finer points of that. I thought it...I thought it had traveled as best it could over a period of about two years, I thought. That was my, was my recollection of it. But, I could be wrong. Can we take a break and let...do you have a drink of water?

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure. Do I seem thirsty, you seem thirsty?

HOCHSTRASSER: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure. We can take a break, let me just stop here a second.

[PAUSE in recording.]

HOCHSTRASSER: 1990 on our 20th wedding anniversary. **[Clatter noise in the background]** Just...and I love the original logo. New Hampshire kept theirs. **[laughing]** We went to something very 20th century.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Let's talk some more here. So, thinking about the Guild and what it does for its members. What would you say are the benefits of being part of the Guild?

HOCHSTRASSER: I feel that the one of the most intrinsic benefits of being a member of the Kentucky Artists and Craftsmen, would be to be identified as one of the really contributing and talented artisans of Kentucky, that would be recognized around the country. And you could build your excellence on that basis.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. There's also educational aspects I would assume.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, there is a tremendous educational aspect of it, but there is opportunities to teach others and to be trained yourself. One of the most meaningful workshops I ever had was in the late '60's, in which we were taught how to keep our accounts and do a Schedule C. And it's stood me in very good stead. And, by that was by an EKU professor who had a little grant from, I guess the Kentucky Guild...had the grant to hire him to teach all of us. And there were about thirty of us in the class.

WILLIHNGANZ: How strong do you feel like the Guild is today?

HOCHSTRASSER: I feel that...**[Cell phone ringing.]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh. I am so sorry; I should have turned this off.

HOCHSTRASSER: You're good; you can turn this off first. **[Laughing]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Hello.

HOCHSTRASSER: No problem. Now you asked me a question.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah I think I.

HOCHSTRASSER: Why was it worth belonging, that's a really scary question? I, I think some craftsmen are unsure at the moment, because by our existence and our growth through the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, we have helped make Kentucky Craft Marketing be a lot more successful agency of State Government, and we have worked very closely with them. But, I think that a lot of people don't see the bigger picture of belonging...being in a membership group that is our own, in addition to being a member of Kentucky Craft Marketing. And, I think they serve different purposes. And, the Kentucky Guild can enhance your life.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well, that's a good perspective. Yeah. I guess part of my question has been, you know, what, what has developed in terms of differing organizations working for the same resources, basically, to get recognition or support from Berea College, or some from the State.

HOCHSTRASSER: So. Did I say that? Well, because that is exactly what I think. I think that we made them get stronger, and they are so effective today that some people in the state don't know why they need to put some dues into our group. When there are reasons and important goals that we could bring to life for them.

WILLIHNGANZ: What and.

HOCHSTRASSER: And what are they?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, can you articulate those a little?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well. I think we need to continue the specialized kind of workshops that we have in working with children. And yes, we can still reach out for those grant monies. But we need to develop a presence in the corporate world, and have them see their value in us. And, we have not worked on that very strongly. We've also had some leadership problems that...that some financial problems. That seem to set us back now and then, and every non-profit group needs to have close touch with their staff, and know that things are going well.

WILLIHNGANZ: You know, as I look at the whole movement toward craft and craft fairs and things, it strikes me that, and tells me what you think. It's similar in some ways to what we are seeing...what is happening with farmers' markets. I mean, at one time, crafts were just an intricate part of people's lives. They were out on the prairie, and needed a basket, and they wove one together, and that's what they lived with. And now, we have craft fairs where we come and look at hand, because hand made is so rare to us. We are so used to manufactured goods from China, or wherever, and the same thing is happening to the farmers. We are so used to mass produced food, when we could actually go to a farmers market and buy something that we know the guy who grew it, and we know what he used. There is a pesticide and everything else, that there is a quality there, that we can't achieve through the mass marketing of things. And I sort of look at that and I think to myself, what, what really is our goal with this movement in terms of crafts. Are we looking to simply improve the quality of handcrafted goods, or are we looking to integrate the process of crafting in one way or another with society. Do we want to, for instance, have craft classes more prevalent in our schools? I don't know if most schools do much in terms of crafts.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, to pick up on that last part. We have now recognized that there are about eight or nine modes of learning, and, for many students, alternative ways of learning. By learning through processes in craft have just been light years improved for some people, as opposed to thinking that you need to get it all out of a book or. So that is a good point. I think that the, the fairs around the nation have

developed very successfully, because people in this mass produced age are recognizing they need to know something more personal. And there is a tremendous delight in seeing something that is exquisitely made, and then talking to the artist, and saying, "How did you do it? What made you do it, and how long have you been doing it?" And, "Where can I try it too?" And, I think we have a complete direction to pursue that would make a lot of this possible.

WILLIHNGANZ: So tell me then, what role you think the production of arts and crafts plays for most people?

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, the bottom line is trying to make a living at an alternative lifestyle, and the ways to do that, and who can enhance it for you, and how can you get trained enough so that you're developing excellence in what you do. I think is the main concern for people.

WILLIHNGANZ: And is that where you see the Guild sort of going in the years ahead?

HOCHSTRASSER: I would like to see it go that way. I would like to see us get a strong enough director that...who has real vision for what the potential is, and draw in the groups that can help support it. And, lead us into another golden era, yeah. We really need to figure out how to make that come to pass.

WILLIHNGANZ: I understand you're concern. It's, if you've been with an organization over a period of years, you really get a chance to see the warp and the weft of it, because any of them have high points and low points, and the variation and it's. I have been a member for seventeen years of the Toast Masters Club in Louisville. And gave speeches and gotten involved with the organization of the club, and became an officer. And, at this point, I've been the president twice, and I've been the vice president of education I think, four times, and I've been the sergeant of arms a couple of times, and I've done all these different things, and done all sorts of different projects for it. And I've just been aware that, you know, sometimes the leadership is such that we have this sort of fading period, when things just sort of slow down and byway, and our typical meeting...we've had somewhere between fifteen and twenty people. That's a good meeting. This mornings meeting we had twenty-one people show up, which is for August...is fantastic.

HOCHSTRASSER: Amazing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Because so many people are on vacation. To have twenty-one people, that shows how strong we are. And the amazing part about this, to me at least, that two years ago, actually three years ago, we were at a place where we were having eleven and twelve people show up each week. And it is much harder to hold a meeting with eleven or twelve people. And, we had a president who was sort of off again and on again. Some weeks he would show up and some weeks he didn't. When he was there, he was kind of low energy. He didn't give us much direction. We just sort of

meandered on. And, I finally took it upon myself to re-invigorate the organization. And, I was more successful than I had hoped for, or actually, I was surprised at how well the organization responded. But even now, what I find is, even though I have, you know, sitting at lunch listening to you folks talk, we have a whole new slate of officers, people who haven't been involved in this organization for more than a year or so, and they are very enthusiastic, but they don't know our history. They don't know how these clubs typically work.

HOCHSTRASSER: They are reinventing the wheel.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, sometimes they are. And so, what I have found to my surprise and delight, actually, is that they love to hear an old guy's opinion of what they ought to do.

HOCHSTRASSER: Oh, interesting.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, I have very little shyness about me. *[laughing]*

HOCHSTRASSER: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, telling people what I think they ought to be doing is real clear for me. And, they may do it and they may not. But I can, I can tell you if you want, some ideas on how to do this. This is what I think has worked in the past and will work again, and this is what you ought to avoid. And, to some extent, it feels like, you know, Susan and Mary and all of you, really, who have been with the organization over a lot of years, have some very clear ideas on what could go on. And, even though you're not in the halls of power now, you really are.

HOCHSTRASSER: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Your seniority puts you there. You have the right and the ability to interject your thoughts into that process. And, I guess that is what I would encourage you to do.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, one of the things that I have noticed is a friend of mine, Doree Adams; a weaver, called my attention to the fact that I started the Fiber Guild of Lexington, which you know, is now thirty years old. And I thought, well yes, we, we did that in order to give visibility to ourselves, to grow in excellence. And, at this point, it is a very small group, because there is a group that wants to be just women in fiber. And another group that wants to be some other activist, but we are hanging on to our fiber 501c3, because we think we are regional, and we are important, and that we do bring lectures on different subjects to people. And now and then, teachers and other visitors come, and are inspired by even this very small group. And, I think that maybe the Kentucky Guild is going through one of those eras, where it has to rethink, on what's most important now, that everything else has gotten so much more effective both technologically and grant wise, at the state level, and services through the Department

of Economic Development, and find a niche that they feel is good for them to, to carry on. I don't think I said that quite well, but.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you think that the arts and crafts area should be funded strongly by the government, or does that influence negatively on the production in those areas?

HOCHSTRASSER: I think the government seriously needs to have a budget to fund arts groups. All countries do that. There's an amazing amount of very good art we want to send abroad. There is never the kind of money in the hand process of paintings, sculpture, weaving that there is in technology kind of jobs, and it's important to our whole culture to develop and have that flourish.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you feel about the rise of juried art fairs? Does that encourage people to become artists or does it discourage them?

HOCHSTRASSER: There was a wonderful workshop several years ago, that the Kentucky Arts Council sponsored, on analyzing arts fairs. They're important at the local level. Then they are important at the local juried level. They are important at the local regional level. They are important at the national level. And, depending on what you're priorities are, and what is satisfying to you. Go for the one that reaches the highest on your list. Because they have very different functions.

WILLIHNGANZ: I sort of agree with you, but you have to understand I come from Louisville, where we have every year the St. James Art Fair.

HOCHSTRASSER: I know.

WILLIHNGANZ: And there are very few Kentuckians that, seems to me, that get into the St. James Art Fair. There are a lot of people from out of state. It amazes me how many artists from quite a ways away get into that.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well, this really points out the fact that it is terribly important that, when we are cutting budgets, that we don't cut the visual arts out of the school curriculum. It's, it's important for Kentucky artists to see what is being done around the country. But then, you have to have educational classes that make it possible for you to get on that track and get good in that field. And, I would say that I've spent a lot of my life helping in the classroom situation, and lots of workshops having people learn more about fiber media, and get better at it.

WILLIHNGANZ: I've been just wondering if, if the art fair, higher end art fair...quality things actually encourage people or discourage people. I'm getting involved. I mean, I go in and look at these wood workers. I've done wood work and done furniture. I mean, I've done a variety of things, and I look at what these guys produce and it's just sort of awesome to me. I can't seriously...you know, my wife talks about, "Gee. This would be fun to do when we retire". There's not a way we could

possibly do this. **[laughing]** I just don't think I could begin to compete on a level of what I see these people producing typically.

HOCHSTRASSER: Well that's interesting. I think our whole society is so built on competition, that we forget to look at the personal satisfaction of doing something. And, I think that, perhaps, that's what I meant when I said I won this award nationally, when I was very young, and said, "Oh I don't think I have to compete". I frequently laughed through the years, and said, "I don't do deadlines". I do my art for my own satisfaction. If it fits in with something and there is a show, I might have something ready but I'm different than a great many people.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, one of the things that Les and I talked a little bit about is, he was telling me a story about what, I believe it was a Ugandan community, and he may have told you about this. You may know about this, but apparently they made shoes. Sandals that were exquisitely designed, and they had golden threads, and they did very fancy designs on these, and they were beautifully made. And, sure enough, some manufacturer realized that they were great, and said, "We'd like for you to make shoes for us". And, they said, "How many do you need?" And he said, "About 100,000 pair". And this was a small village. **[Laughing]** And you wonder, you know, to what extent you can produce without becoming a manufacturer.

HOCHSTRASSER: Losing it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Losing it, losing the authenticity.

HOCHSTRASSER: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: The originality and all of that.

HOCHSTRASSER: And now, we are in an era where people come to fairs and steal the ideas, and take it back to other, other places, and create hundreds of thousands of them.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah that's true.

HOCHSTRASSER: It's, it's a challenge, but I think you have to be doing it for your own personal satisfaction and, and I do realize that a lot of artists are very anxious about the person who does come to a fair, to take that idea back to some other country and...

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes. I've seen signs that say, "Don't Take Pictures".

HOCHSTRASSER: Right. That is true.

WILLIHNGANZ: And all of that, because they are obviously concerned about that very thing. I guess I've already asked a bunch of these questions.

HOCHSTRASSER: I wanted to share with you...

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes, please do.

HOCHSTRASSER: ...a little of our history in terms of...here is a very old membership list from 1983. Its fun to look back to see whose been a member that long. We had a logo that, that we carried for many years. And, one of our artists, Patty Banks, did the cover.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh that's beautiful.

HOCHSTRASSER: We had beautiful posters from the fairs over many years, and made that sort of an honorary or award thing for people to do. But we, in the late '90's, developed a new logo, which talks about the hand and the 20th century. And the, the circles of reaching out, but I have a strong inclination to think that this would last forever. And this, you might not know it, was all about...but that is just a personal comment. I thought it was fun. I'm someone who saves the articles. This was from the Year of American Craft from 1993, which was very strong nationally. Telling what Kentucky had to offer in the craft area. It says "Kentucky Shines Bright as Nations Spotlight Crafts". And we had a very interesting program then. These...this is a press release we did for something, and we had a newsletter that went out to people. We don't have one at the moment, but that's something that is terribly important for every group in the arts, to hold themselves together and build from.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Now, are you still active. I mean do you go to the regular meetings of the Guild and still?

HOCHSTRASSER: Yes, and well I'm, I'm away in the summer nowadays, but I am coming back in time for the annual meeting of the Kentucky Guild, which I believe is the 12th of October. And, I am a member of the National Hand Weavers Group, Hand Weavers...GHA, as we call it. I'm a member of the Tapestry Alliance, and the Textile Society of America, and I'm very involved in helping others discover how incredible tapestry is today, and how it was done by the artist, with the artists it reaches, and the artists hands, and not by some designer from somewhere else.

WILLIHNGANZ: Will you be selling some of your wares at the fair?

HOCHSTRASSER: No. I did the fair in 1969, and decided that I wasn't someone who will be making dozens of something, and that I was really more interested in the educational aspects of the crafts.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. So that is what you've decided is your role?

HOCHSTRASSER: So I have played a busy life in that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well I think I've pretty much exhausted my questions. Are there any other comments you'd like to offer or any observations?

HOCHSTRASSER: Oh no. I, I should think of, I didn't bring it with me. Will you ask me how the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsman contributed to my growth, and it sounds funny, but I think I learned a lot of leadership skills through some forty-five years as a member. And, I learned how to set up my books and my Schedule C very early on. No. I think, I think we've done the best as I know how do to.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, and thank you so much.

HOCHSTRASSER: I had not done that before, so that was a challenge.
[Laughing]

[End of tape.]