

KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY AND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

Interview with Sister Ruth Anna Iwanski, Anna Hicks, Lewis Newman
Interviewer is Amanda Fickey
July 30th, 2013

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. . . This symbol refers to an interruption to the speaker

Fickey: Well let me start by saying thank you, Ruth Ann for sitting down with me today. I just want to do a brief announcement for the recording that we have.

Iwanski: Okay.

Fickey: So the date is July, 30th 2013 and the interviewer is Amanda Fickey on behalf of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association and the interviewee, would you state your name for us?

Iwanski: Sister Ruth Ann Iwanski.

Fickey: Thank you, Ruth Ann and we are located at David Appalachian Crafts in David, Kentucky and the time is approximately 5 after 10 in the morning. So, let's get started Ruth Ann. I thought we would begin by doing a basic overview of your position here at David Appalachian Crafts and what the organization's about.

Iwanski: Okay, my formal title is Director of David Appalachian Crafts.

Fickey: Tell me a little bit about David Appalachian Crafts. What's your organization's mission?

Iwanski: Okay. The mission has always been to help preserve the Appalachian crafts and to mentor and work with crafters and try to help them to develop their businesses. So, we've had . . . Since the beginning we've had ladies that sewed items and we developed a whole series of things such as bonnets and potholders, Christmas ornaments, quilts, wall hangings that we've wholesaled and each of the ladies are paid for their piecework and we continue to do that on a small scale. Over the years, we've gotten more and more people who have consignment crafts in the shop and that varies depending on the people that are interested in having their products sold. And we also have some things that we purchase, especially the pottery and the consumable items.

Fickey: Now Ruth Ann when did David Appalachian Crafts actually begin?

Iwanski: Okay. David Appalachian Crafts is celebrating its 41st anniversary, so it was 1972 when they started. Mary Pineau came down from Michigan. The mission had started. Saint Vincent Mission which we are a part of, started about 2 and half or three years before that and the coal mine company had pulled out of David, the last one that was here and owned the city itself and the Brothers of Charity helped the people to buy back their houses and so the men were out of work at that time and the ladies needed something, you know, kind of a social place for them to gather. And Mary taught them how to make things such as draperies and clothing and they reciprocally taught her how to do quilting, hand quilting, because that was very much a part of their culture at that time. So they gradually then developed a line of little fabric ornaments and flowers and corn shuck items and I think one of the first shows that they went to was the Appalachian Festival up in Cincinnati and then gradually John Rosenberg encouraged them to try to get some wholesale orders and then when the Kentucky Craft Market started with Phyllis George, then the craft center was one of the first groups that was in the Kentucky Craft Market. So David Appalachian Crafts has been in the Craft Market, you know, for the 31 years that they've been established. Then they got into the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftspeople and the Southern Highlands Guild. So that's how we found different places that we could sell wholesale. And then they continued to have a retail shop here in David.

Fickey: Now, Ruth Ann, let me step back just a second and ask how did you become involved with David Appalachian Crafts?

Iwanski: Okay. I got involved, it would be 17 years on October 1st, when I was working in Illinois at a school for severely and profound mentally challenged and at that point we were going to be closing the school so I saw a job application that Sister Ida Marie Deville who was then the director of the mission had put out for sisters and they were looking for somebody to work with the crafts center. So she said, "Well, why don't you come down?" And so I came down for about a week and they had me to sew some things to show them that I really knew what I was to sew and visited with the different board members and the staff here and then, you know, went back to Illinois and then the board, you know, they gave their review and decided yes, that they would hire me at that time.

Fickey: Now, did you grow up in Illinois?

Iwanski: I grew up in Wisconsin. I was born in Wisconsin and did my high school and college in Wisconsin and then did some teaching there and went on to get a degree in adapted physical education and that's how I got to work with the handicapped population.

Fickey: Well, maybe you could tell me just a little bit about when did you decide to become a sister and to make this part of your life's work?

Iwanski: Well, actually, I probably always wanted to be a sister. I just did a little thing for my community about that and I was, you know, 4 or 5 years old, I had an uncle who was a Jesuit priest and he would come visit us and he taught me about different flowers and nature and I just thought, you know, he was a very holy person and he taught us about art history, you know, through the years. I just had that feeling that this is what I would like to do is to work with people to do that type of teaching, social work. So it just always stuck with me.

Fickey: Yea, so in a way, David Appalachian Crafts was a wonderful place for you to sort of land and be able to do work. What has it meant to you to be here and to do work ().

Iwanski: To work with the crafts, especially and to help them develop their products and their businesses and to be mentors to them, to become friends with them. It's encouraging to see them growing and that's, you know, as much knowledge that I can give to them in packaging or pricing or those types of tips that we can work with them on. And the sewers, you know, when I first came we had two groups of sewers. We had a group over in Drift, Kentucky and we would sit around and work on the Christmas ornaments there on Wednesdays and here at David we'd work on the ornaments of Tuesdays and Thursdays and it's the just socialization with the women, to help them . . . As they're working on the crafts, you know, they would be able to talk. It's sort of like therapeutic recreation that they didn't realize that they were doing, you know. Helping them connect with their families. Subsequently, I've worked over in () with a group of sewers there and the last five years I've been working at Hope In the Mountains as an outreach which is a rehab center for women and I've been working with them in sewing on Wednesday afternoons. There again, you know, it's the therapeutic nature of that and then teaching crafts here on Thursday mornings to a group of devout mentally disabled adults. Just to see their enthusiasm about creating things.

Fickey: Right. Now the rehab center is this for prescription drug abuse rehabilitation or for physical therapy rehabilitation?

Iwanski: No, its drug and alcohol rehab. It's a 90 day program here in Prestonsburg.

Fickey: Okay. Will you tell me a little bit more about the experience you've had working with those folks and why that was important for David Appalachian Crafts to reach out to a rehabilitation center in the community?

Iwanski: Okay. The mission is trying to, you know, reach out to people with different needs and when it opened Sister Kathleen helped them get their food pantry stocked up and so she introduced me to Renee and said, "I think she might be able to do some sewing with the ladies". So I signed up as a volunteer so the mission has sponsored that outreach program.

Fickey: Well, and the reason I ask that question is drug abuse is such a huge challenge facing this region and it's very interesting to me to think that David Appalachian Crafts could play a very positive role in providing support in therapeutic activities.

Iwanski: And the mission has been supportive of the ladies, like I said, some things for their food pantries at different times and then we have the Christmas store programs so those ladies that are there at that particular time of the year have been included in the Christmas store and that gives them a chance, because they're not able to maybe get out or have the money to have gifts for their families so that that can be a good memory for them that they can . . . And they've also helped some . . . Coming out to do some gardening. One of the groups came out and did, you know, some community outreach by coming and doing gardening here and then one time we had some little dresses that we were able to share with them and in turn they made some little tooth fairy pillows for our Christmas store for the students, so it's like we're trying to get them to also do some community service. And then a couple of the ladies when they've relocated in the area, the mission has been able to help them get their items that they might need for their home, like say for their kitchen or linens. That type of thing.

Fickey: Let me ask a broader question about the structure of David Appalachian Crafts, because I know a lot of the examples that you're mentioning for community service, they're very barter in nature right, like, you're providing one service for another or one good for another. And David Appalachian Crafts is more of a cooperative structure, right?

Iwanski: We consider it sort of like a cottage industry because we don't have people as you would in a co-op that they would all come and do service work. Now Louis does come often to help with volunteering for different things and for working at shows. They people that we get that help us like with cleaning or labeling things are people that come to the mission that are in need maybe of electrical, you know, a bill or some . . . either electric or gas or that type of thing and then they come and do community service and so in order that the mission can pay for a bill, so as far as the crafters, it's more of a cottage industry. They do their work on their items at home, because many of them are at a distance that it would be difficult for them to come here to work, you know, some of them have said that they would be willing to do something, you know, to help advertise, it's because of the distance and the cost of the gas et cetera. It would be difficult for them to come here and work at the center.

Fickey: So it sounds like the mission as a whole has a diverse range of economic practices, but maybe the craft portion's more of a cottage industry . . . But even still, if you have barter going on within that, there's even diversity within that cottage industry.

Iwanski: Right.

Fickey: Well, let me ask you just a quick follow up question to that. So some of the individuals that are making craft goods for David Appalachian Crafts, is this a primary source of income or a secondary source or a hobby.

Iwanski: Okay. As far as Louis, that's his primary source of income, making his gourds. And Anna, one of our . . . and Elizabeth, the two main sewers, that's their primary source of income, you know, to supplement their social security. And the other crafters many of them, if they have their own business, some of our jeweler makers, woodworkers, this is just one place that they have their crafts so it's just a percentage of their income.

Fickey: And if you were to think that at this moment, do you have more males or females, younger or older? What's sort of the demographic or the makeup that you're seeing?

Iwanski: I'd say more of our people are middle aged and older. We have a few younger, you know, like in their twenties, you know, 19, 20s. But I'd say most of them are probably 40 and older that we have.

Fickey: Has that changed over time in the seventeen years you've been here or?

Iwanski: Well, the people have gotten older, so that's . . . (Laughter, Iwanski) If they were in their 30s, you know, they're now in their 40s and 50s.

Fickey: Do you have examples of folks that started when they were in their 30s that were producing crafts and then sort of aged along with you?

Iwanski: Yea, the sewers that we have, Anna and Elizabeth and you know, Anita, they were younger when they started. Anna started at the beginning, you know, of the craft center. And Elizabeth probably shortly after that. I'm just thinking, Tom Whitaker, you know with his prints, you know, he's been with the craft center. And Thelma Crawford, some of those people, they probably were younger when they started.

Fickey: Okay, so when you initiated () you did have some younger ().

Iwanski: Yea.

Fickey: So how many new, young folk have come in to producing crafts in the past five years? Have you seen any . . .?

Iwanski: Oh, for us?

Fickey: Yea.

Iwanski: I'd say maybe around 8.

Fickey: Okay.

Iwanski: Yea.

Fickey: So, in terms of asking about the future of the craft industry and the region or . . . I know it's a little uncertain what's going to happen with David Appalachian Crafts, but maybe you can talk about that on a local level and a regional level.

Iwanski: The sales of crafts, as far the total sales of crafts have probably fluctuated since I've been here, but basically, the wholesale sales have probably gone down and as we've tried to contact various outlets that we've sold to previously, many of them have closed. Many of the smaller outlets, you know, they've come and gone over the years. I see that part of that is the economy, people having difficulty keeping small businesses open. Now, the bigger shops like the Artisan Center and the Southern Highland Guild shops, Red Bird Mission, they've pretty consistently, you know, been good buyers, though the volume is maybe a little bit down. And certain items, you know the type of items that they do buy, you know, it's like pillows have gone out of style. Quilts. We used to get a lot of orders for special order quilts and part of that, the market is because of all the imports, I think. And then some people say, "Well, young people are not so much into heritage crafts anymore". Or don't see the heirloom value of some of these items. So I look at Hindman has an artisan center and I've been on their advisory board since their beginning. 12 years or so ago, before they opened even. And I see the type of crafts that they have. They have some of the same crafters that we do, so we try to support each other that way. Give information back and forth. But they also have people who are producing things that are maybe a little bit more contemporary in style, I don't know exactly how to explain that, but the artwork, the types of things that they have there.

Fickey: Can you think of a good example of maybe what . . .

Iwanski: Well, there's one lady who does dolls, but they're not like your traditional dolls. They're painted and just a little edgy, I don't know, if that's the word. Some may be a little grotesque even.

Fickey: Or maybe gothic? I think I'm thinking of the same dolls.

Iwanski: Yea. So those are some things that we don't, you know, it's like, the girl's not approached us but I mean we might not have juried in that type of craft because we've always said a little but more traditional crafts here at David. Though, we do have some of the same jewelry that they carry there. Well, the woodworking, some of the wood working that's the same. And I know that they're also looking at because they're kind of off the road, they're not right on the highway that it's difficult to attract people to come in. Though we did have two busses within this last month, but we used to have more tour busses come through, but the tour bus industry, motor coach industry basically caters to older people. The younger people don't seem to take motor coach tours. We're not getting as many as previously, so you have to attract people that are driving themselves or traveling themselves and it's interesting, we have gotten people from England and, you know, China, Poland, different places. A few here and there from foreign countries that, you know, will find us on the internet or whatever and pop in. Which is kind of ironic, you know? (Laughter, Iwanski and Fickey) People from Pikeville don't know where we are or don't know that we've been here for 41 years.

Fickey: But people from England.

Iwanski: Yea, so it's just what people are looking for. If people are specifically looking for arts and crafts then they would pop in here or at the tourism office or over at Hindman or over at the Ramada where they have their art gallery there.

Fickey: So thinking of ways that craft productions might speak to larger conversations, it seems like to me, there's such a movement towards producing goods locally and making small scale agriculture something that children are familiar with and trying to teach them to appreciate local

production of goods. Are crafts producers trying to engage with those development conversations and, you know, get the word out that instead of buying that imported quilt at JC Penny's, you should spend the extra money for a quilt that will last your lifetime made by a local artisan and that should be a development strategy for the region instead of importing so many goods, we should do import substitution. Have you heard any of those conversations taking place or do you think people are interesting in that or?

Iwanski: I think, you know, at the local level you get the grade school teacher there, the art teacher is trying to work with the students and at our local festival they produce things and sell them and I think she encourages them to learn a little bit about some of the traditional crafts but also to do some little ornaments or different little items that they can also sell themselves and the students, the middle grade students are also helping with the selling so there's some of that. I'm not sure who is teaching the culture at the college, but when Mr. Sloan was teaching, he would have each one of his students find somebody who was producing or who could talk about some of the crafts, you know, traditional or contemporary crafts and bring them into the class and encourage the students there at the college level. I know tourism has had some discussions around this topic that they want to try to, you know, keep the crafts alive, but it's a matter of funding, you know, it's like how can you fund those positions. The college has a program called ECHO and I forget what the . . . But Mrs. Stumbo is there and is trying to, you know, have the presence of the arts. She's been kind of stressing the cultural arts as far as the music and those types of programs, but it's more than just the handmade crafts, so they came out to see what was happening here and have displays there at the college. So there's some of that. The beginnings of it anyway. But I don't know how the economy can sustain that, you know, we had a lady before, I mean she's deceased now, but she was very much into preserving the crafts and the quilts and would order quilts and then would give them as gifts to their employees or their friends or whatever. Teaching that way individually, but unless you have those sponsors or whatever, it's hard to get that message across. And in Hindman, they're doing that thing with the dulcimers and I think that's wonderful, because they've got the baskets and the dulcimers in their history so they're doing the project with trying to collect samples so that they can reproduce the historical samples of the . . . And they actually, I didn't realize it, but Anna Hicks' brother Michael is the one that's over there that's working with the dulcimers. So that's kind of in the family. The culture.

Fickey: Yea and that's a great example of taking traditional design and making a more contemporary production. Just to make sure, Ruth Ann, when you refer to college you're talking about Alice Lloyd?

Iwanski: No, I'm talking about the Big Sandy technical. Yea and Alice Lloyd I know Mike Wear is there and I'm sure he tries to stress the crafts and the culture with his students in pottery.

Fickey: Now the program you referenced at Big Sandy technical, will you tell me the name?

Iwanski: ECHO. E-C-H-O.

Fickey: Ok. I just wanted to clarify, because I know you have () college and you now have the University of Pikeville, so just to make sure.

Iwanski: And I'm not aware of anything at the University of Pikeville, but you are of course.

Fickey: Yea. It's underway, but not quite out there yet. I guess that's a good question too, do you feel like Appalachian Studies is being taught or engaged with as frequently now as when you may have come here?

Iwanski: Like I said, I'm not sure if somebody has taken over Mr. Sloan's class since he's retired this past year.

Fickey: But you haven't heard from anyone?

Iwanski: No, I've not. I've gone to his class several times for different students that have asked me to come over the years.

Fickey: Well, and in general at the lower level, with elementary school students and middle school students, do you feel like its being incorporated much at all at this point?

Iwanski: Well, like I said, I think at the elementary school, the Prestonsburg Elementary, who is very good with the students and I know Betsy Lane High School has a heritage type day or whatever and they have people come in and Allen Middle School, we went to teach there one time.

Fickey: So you do see . . .

Iwanski: There's some. Yea.

Fickey: Is there anything that we haven't touched on, Ruth Ann, that you think is really important regarding the structure of David Appalachian Crafts or what the organization is trying to do in the community or has been trying to do over time that we need to touch on?

Iwanski: Just that, you know, we're part of St. Vincent Mission, we're just one of the programs of St. Vincent Mission. And over the years, the people we've been working with has kind of changed. Like I said, it was first the women who were the coal miner's wives and it was just a lot of socializations, potlucks, working around the tables, you know, larger groups, then gradually, you know, it's like we've got the different willow furniture, different types of furniture in here. Prints. And then gradually reached out to more and more of the consignment crafters and then over the years, we've done more shows and the last probably 8 years, we've been going to a lot of the churches and the reason we got invited is because those people come to the mission to do home repairs and so the connections that we have in the outside community and you know, Maryland, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Georgia, those places where we've gone for shows are because of the connections to the people who come here for the mission.

Fickey: And are those two way programs? The people that come here to work on the homes? Does St. Vincent Mission then send people to work at their church?

Iwanski: No, they invite the crafts center to come and do a craft show.

Fickey: Ok. And you're still doing that now?

Iwanski: We did several craft shows this summer, but since I'm not going to be here, they've canceled the craft shows for the fall.

Fickey: Well, it seems like there have been a lot of shifts that have taken place over the years.

Iwanski: There have since I've been here, yes. And we didn't used to sell fabric. We only bought fabric that we used for the crafts that we produced, but we've gradually built up a stock of fabric that we pull from for our crafts, but also can sell to any of the ladies that come in. And we got involved in going to quilt shows, like the Berea Quilt Extravaganza, the quilt shows done locally in our counties and taking our remnants and the fabrics that we have for books, used books, quilt books that type of thing. So that was kind of a shift that was to get the word out there about David Crafts.

Fickey: We'll start to wrap up Ruth Ann, but as you think back through these 17 years of being here, do you feel hopeful about craft production in the future in the region, do you think there will always be someone producing crafts . . . ?

Iwanski: Like as far as quilts, people say "Well there aren't any quilters out there". Well, there are a lot of quilters out there. A lot of people making quilts. The thing is, we have two quilt guilds in Floyd County, Johnson County, Pike County. They all have their quilt guilds and we have a very good teacher, Nan () who is internationally known as a quilt teacher and as a producer herself. She's won numerous awards and the thing is the women like to produce the quilts, but they're not very much into selling them. They make them for their family. They make them as heirlooms for their family or for friends, so I see that there is . . . Since '76 when quilts kind of came back after the centennial, you know, it's like, then we have more and more people getting into this quilting and there's a lot of people out there doing crafts, you see them at the festivals. You see people, you know, on their email or Etsy or whatever, producing. And that's kind of how the young people, I think, are marketing their crafts, more individually that way, then through shops, like David Crafts. So I see that because there's always people who are going to be creative and want to do things, you know, I think it's going to take a different turn and I'm not sure how it will . . . Part of it depends on the economy, you know, as far as the wholesale retail of crafts, you know.

Fickey: Well and that's something curious to me too just the years I've worked in the industry, being in Somerset and watching the () Artisans open the () Co-op art shop and seeing them turn to more cooperative forms and in a sense St. Vincent Missions seems very cooperative oriented to me. But I wonder if that will be part of the path forward too.

Iwanski: And the mission is heading more in the direction of sustainable agriculture. That type of a model. They've been doing the Grow Appalachia now for 3 years and so that's kind of expanding.

Fickey: So towards community gardens . . .

Iwanski: Right. So the college has a big community garden and Hope in the Mountain has a garden there. There's probably 20 some families that are involved with the Grow Appalachia program and then the farmers market and we went several times, you know, to the farmers market to sell crafts and that's something new this year, so I think if people catch onto that and the farmers market expands, you know, to get more producers. That's something that they would like to grow.

Fickey: Well, I think this is, in a way, a very positive note to end on.

Iwanski: It's evolving, you know, and that's exactly what life is.

Fickey: Right and its not disappearing and we're not trying to save it. It's just reshaping and evolving and changing.

Iwanski: Right. Yea.

Fickey: And I think that's a good positive conclusion. (Laughter, Fickey) Well, with that, Ruth Ann, I think we'll go ahead and wrap up for today, but thank you so much for sitting with me.

Iwanski: You're welcome. Okay.

(Next interviewees come in)

Fickey: Okay, so I'm going to do a quick announcement just to announce who we are and where we are and then we'll jump into the interview okay? So the date is July 30, 2013. The interviewer is Amanda Fickey on behalf of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association and the interviewees would you state your names for me?

Iwanski: Sister Ruth Ann Iwanski.

Hicks: Anna Hicks.

Newman: Lewis Newman.

Fickey: Thank you and we're located at David Appalachian Crafts in David, Kentucky. So let me start by saying thank you for sitting down and doing this interview with me today. What I thought we might do is start with some basic biographical information about each of you and the work that you produce and then we'll go into a discussion about David Appalachian Crafts and why it's important to you to work with this organization and how long you've worked with the organization and so forth. So Lewis, let's start with you. Tell me a little bit about where you grew up and how you became interested in being a craft producer?

Newman: I was born in () Kentucky and when I was about five years old my family moved to Akron, Ohio and I was raised up in Ohio mostly. I came back every summer to visit, but I've been painting and drawing my whole life, ever since I could grab a pencil. So mostly, I've just been working in charcoal and a little bit acrylic and I experimented around with soft pastels and oils.

Fickey: So how did you decide that you wanted to take it from kind of playing around with it into making it a career?

Newman: Well, my grandpa got sick and I came back to Kentucky to . . . Well, before then I worked 13 years in the coal mines in Kentucky back and forth and I got tired of coal mines, so I picked up painting again and then my grandpa got sick and I moved in with him to help take care of him and I just started . . . Didn't have anything really to do, so I just started drawing and painting and again. Got interested in it again and decided to just take it full time, instead of just messing around with it.

Fickey: Right, so you wanted this to be your primary source of income.

Newman: Yea.

Fickey: Just a quick question about that, was it more rewarding that working in the mines? Why or why not?

Newman: Well, I liked it a lot better. (Laughter, Newman) It was more relaxing and I enjoyed it a whole lot more. Plus, I like telling a story in my pictures about how the past used to be what time forgot.

Fickey: Ok. The reason I ask that is in some cases when you're first starting out, maybe you could have made more wages as a miner versus as an artist until you become well known.

Newman: Yea, I could have, but with the mines though, little truck mines that I worked for, you might work for two years or a year then you might go three years without a job and you would have to go to Ohio or another state to find work in between. So I decided to try to make it as an artist.

Fickey: So it was kind of unstable. There was a lot of risk with it. Lots of reasons to move to becoming an artist.

Newman: Yea.

Fickey: So let me stop for just a moment Lewis and we'll shift to Anna. Anna can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and how you became interested in being a craft producer and a little bit about your crafts that you produce?

Hicks: I grew up in Knott County. The oldest of 10 children and I graduated from high school in '62. Got married in '64 and moved to Indianapolis, worked at RCA. Then we moved to Kendallville, Indiana, then to Willard, Ohio. (Laughter, Hicks)

Fickey: Now, was this all for employment? Were you moved for job opportunities?

Hicks: Yea. And because we didn't like the location, too.

Fickey: Ok. And then you somehow made your way back to Kentucky?

Hicks: Eventually, yea.

Fickey: Now, when did you start producing crafts and what did you first start making?

Hicks: I have sewn all my life, made clothes and things. When I first came here, I made napkins and napkin rings and little stuff. Then I started quilting.

Fickey: Now, is it similar to Lewis, is this your primary source of income?

Hicks: Right.

Fickey: Yea. So that was important to you to be able to make a living from that.

Hicks: Right.

Fickey: Now, you're both representatives or members of David Appalachian Crafts, so tell us a little bit about why you felt it was important to start working with this organization and what you've gained from it. Lewis, we'll start with you.

Lewis: Well, before I came to David Craft, before I even found out about it, I checked the whole area, couldn't find nowhere to sell hardly, couldn't trust no one. And then somebody told me about David Appalachian Crafts, so I came here, I was painting on wood and canvas and doing charcoal and I didn't even know what a gourd was. I had never seen one before and they introduced me to a gourd and I've been painting birds and animals on them ever since.

Fickey: And Anna, how about you? How did you find your way to David Appalachian Crafts? Were you looking for a place to sell like Lewis?

Hicks: No, I was looking for craft supplies and I looked David Crafts up in the phone book.

Fickey: Ok. So about how long have you been with this organization?

Newman: This would be 11 years for me.

Fickey: 11. How about you Anna?

Hicks: From '79 until now. However many . . .

Fickey: Ok. And you were doing some sewing at home, so did you sell your pieces here in the store?

Hicks: I sold for them. They supplied the materials and things and what they want.

Fickey: Ok. So now, Lewis, let me have you clarify something for me, you said it was hard to find a place to sell or a place you wanted to put your wares. What was the situation like? What were you encountering at that time?

Newman: Well I went to tourism, Mountain Arts Center and Hindman and a couple of those shops, I forget their names and Paintsville and in the shops in Paintsville they weren't honest about selling your work and stuff. And tourism, they weren't really selling anything hardly and I wanted a bigger place to branch out. In Hindman, they started the art . . . what do you call that?

Iwanski: Artisan Center.

Newman: Yea, Artisan Center and they saw my wood product and they said it wasn't really for them, but they took my paintings and they recommended David Appalachian Craft.

Fickey: And so were you encountering some different organizations that wanted to take your work and sell it for you and mark up the price? Is that what you were worried about?

Newman: Yea. Yea.

Fickey: And maybe you weren't getting a fair . . .

Newman: Well most of the time I wasn't getting paid for it. They'd sell it and then they say four or five months they'd be out of business.

Fickey: Oh, so you'd never see the money.

Newman: So when I came here, they were real honest and helpful and fair about it.

Fickey: So you think you got a lot of guidance and instruction.

Newman: Yea, a whole lot of guidance and I learned how to sell. I learned how to talk to people. They taught me everything, really. How to market your wares and go to shows. They go to church shows and they travel all over eastern United States and what I loved about, when I got a chance to go with them to the shows, you got to meet new people, you got to see different places and what I love about it is the expression on people's faces that bought my work and other people's work. See the enjoyment that it gave to them.

Fickey: Now Anna, do you feel the same way? Was there a lot of support and guidance given to you by David Appalachian Crafts? What do you think you gained as a craft producer by being involved?

Hicks: I don't travel like he did. I worked on staff in here and I enjoyed the crafters that always came in.

Fickey: So what did you do as part of the staff? Did you help run the shop? Did you do sales? What do you do as a staff member?

Hicks: I prepared the orders and got the fabrics ready and gave them to the people to do.

Fickey: And how long have you been a staff member?

Hicks: I'm not now. I was for almost 20 years.

Fickey: So in a way, David Appalachian Crafts provided you with a lot of employment opportunities over the years. So, Ruth Ann, listening to Louis and Anna talk about their experience here, I mean, how does this make you feel? Do you feel like this was the goal of the program to provide guidance and employment opportunities?

Iwanski: Yea, I think that's exactly what we were talking about in the other interview and you know, I worked with Anna for about 12 or 13 years. So we worked together and now Anna's our major producer of wholesale items since she's been working from home again. So Anna is almost the whole history of David Crafts, she's been with us in one capacity or another. First working at home, then working here. As far as matching fabrics and all that, you know, she's done all of that.

Fickey: So when the mission first came to the region and started thinking about a David Appalachian Crafts program, you think this would have been what they'd envision long term, being able to provide guidance and marketing, advertising assistance and job employment opportunities, you think all that fits within the goal?

Iwanski: I think when they first started, they were thinking because the coal mines had closed down that the women needed some place to talk about what was happening in their lives, because their husbands no longer had work and giving them an outlet for socialization to start out with and then some assistance in taking over the management of their homes and making

their own clothing and that type of thing. And then sharing what they knew about quilting and hand sewing themselves. It kind of all worked together and they started development little crafts that they could do and working around the table together eventually getting wholesale orders and it just sort of has evolved, you know, through the years. You know, as the different senior citizens have come to be, there wasn't as much a need for the socialization, people got transportation which they didn't have initially, there are still people who have difficulty with transportation, but it's not as big a problem as it used to be. So I think the whole craft initiative has evolved through the years, so it's like, we're still doing some wholesale, but we're doing much more of the retail. With Lewis working with crafters like that, helping them start their own businesses . . .

Newman: Where you got us into the Kentucky Market, Crafted. Where you get in other shops and everything. Get in big name shops.

Fickey: And a lot of that takes a lot of entrepreneur effort, right? Like you have to put your work out and build those relationships. So Ruth Ann, one of the reasons that we're here today is because the mission is looking into going into other directions and the future of the craft shop is uncertain and you'll be leaving for a different position elsewhere. What do you foresee as possibilities as what might happen to the shop and what the plan might be?

Iwanski: There's been some talk about setting up the area a little bit more of the historical things. Maybe sort of a mini museum and a smaller gift shop. Trying to concentrate on items that have sold more readily in the past. The board will decide, you know, are they going to consider keeping consignment or not keeping consignment, just doing maybe purchased items. But I think they hope to keep it open especially for their volunteer groups that come in and then some of the other staff might be able to take care of the occasional visitors that come through.

Fickey: Anna and Lewis, how does this make you feel, to know that the mission . . . And the mission is looking into sustainable agriculture. Are they looking into any other initiatives beyond sustainable agriculture or is that going to be the main focus of the mission you think?

Iwanski: They have their program, the food pantry, the second hand store and then they have the home repairs and they also have the emergency needs program and the Christmas store. So it seems like with the way the economy is, there's more and more need for people with emergencies, as far as needing help with electric and those types of things. So they need to concentrate their funds in those directions.

Fickey: Anna and Lewis, as you know that things are shifting at the mission and the future is a little uncertain, what are you doing to prepare for changes that might take place here at David Appalachian Crafts? Are you looking at new venues . . .?

Newman: I'm kind of very established through the Kentucky Craft Market and I already sell at other places so it's kind of steady orders so it won't affect me very much.

Fickey: Okay. Good. What about you Anna? Are you worried about these changes? Do you have anything else in place?

Hicks: Well, it's sad, but I can see where it needs to be done. It's going to hurt financially, but . . .

Iwanski: Well, as far as the wholesale orders, we've registered Anna, because she's our main crafter with the Kentucky Crafted, so we hope to continue the wholesale orders, at least in the short term that they have for the fabric items.

Fickey: And what about in terms of the guidance and the assistance you provided here, do you think there's any other venue that young artists or artists like yourselves that are retiring and want to go into craft production full time, where should they go for help?

Newman: Only place I know where they could go for help would be Red Bird Mission and talk to old crafters like me or Anna and the Kentucky Craft Market.

Fickey: Anna is there anyone that you've worked with outside of David Appalachian Crafts that .

. .

Hicks: No. (Laughter, Hicks and Fickey)

Iwanski: She's spent her whole life dedicated to David Crafts pretty much.

Hicks: Right. Right.

Fickey: Well, and I ask that question in terms of how do you think the craft industry is going to evolve over the next 5 years, what kind of trends do you see taking place?

Newman: Well, I see if the economy doesn't pick up, there's going to be very few crafters that can . . . It's going to take a diehard crafter to stay in business.

Fickey: What do you mean by die hard crafter?

Newman: That you want to do it no matter what. No matter how bad the economy gets or what, you still keep doing your craft.

Fickey: And it's kind of like a vocation or something that you're called to do and you're going to stick with it. Is that kind of how you feel, Anna?

Hicks: Right.

Fickey: And one of the questions I talked about with Ruth Ann earlier today was in terms of the people that you're seeing producing crafts. Are you seeing more middle aged or older individuals? Are you seeing some younger people becoming interested in crafts? What are you seeing at the moment?

Newman: I don't know on that one to tell you the truth. (Laughter, Newman and Hicks)

Fickey: What do you see at fairs?

Newman: Oh at fairs and stuff?

Iwanski: The market.

Newman: More jewelry makers but they're mostly older people that are retired and want a second income. And they really don't want to make a living at it, they just want to make extra money.

Fickey: Is that different than when you started making crafts?

Newman: Well, that's kind of always been there. But you meet some people that are die hard just craft only and they want to make it as a living, but you meet very few of them.

Fickey: And what have you seen, Anna? Do you think you've seen a lot of people that want to do it for a living or they're just doing it as second income?

Hicks: You can't do it for a living.

Fickey: Yea, you feel like you're always doing something else.

Hicks: Right, it's just a supplement.

Newman: I don't know, I've been doing it 11 years. (Laughter, Newman)

Fickey: And you've found a way to make it work.

Newman: Yea.

Fickey: Lewis, on that question, have you done any sort of side work that's given you extra cash . . .

Newman: I take side orders. Do portraits for people and stuff and that kind of helps out.

Fickey: Right. Do you do anything like that Anna? Do you take special orders from people that want a wedding quilt or . . .

Hicks: No. I could. I get requests, but I don't do anything.

Iwanski: But she does for her family.

Hicks: I stay busy here (Laughter, Hicks)

Fickey: But do you make some for your family?

Hicks: Oh yea.

Fickey: On the side? Are those more for like holiday or birthday or for celebrations?

Hicks: Right.

Fickey: Is there a difference between what you make for your family and what you make here? Do you feel the same way about all of it?

Hicks: I feel the same way about all of it.

Fickey: Tell me a little bit about what you feel about it. Do you feel like it's a traditional craft or is it important because it's Appalachian or what makes it significant to you?

Hicks: It's just fun. I like to do it. (Laughter, Hicks)

Fickey: That's a good reason too, because you enjoy to make something. Is that kind of how you feel about it too?

Newman: Well, I do. Plus I want to keep history alive too. Make pictures how people used to mine coal, how they used to live and how the buildings used to look. Just stuff like that.

Fickey: Do you think that's fading away or that people don't have to opportunity to learn about it as much or?

Newman: To me, the fading away (). One year it would be good, the next year would be bad. But still, as long as you have pictures of it, future generations can go back and look at it.

Fickey: Now, do you have any opportunities to work with local art teachers? I know Ruth Ann was talking about some local art teachers that are trying to do more with Appalachian culture and art programs. Is any of that available to you?

Newman: I met a couple art teachers before and stuff like that. We did a couple murals in Oil Springs with other artists.

Fickey: Ok, yea. And what were those murals of?

Newman: Mine was a general store.

Fickey: So what were some of the other murals that other artists did?

Newman: () theaters. I forgot, what were they?

Iwanski: That one rooster.

Newman: Yea, a rooster.

Iwanski: And the outdoor scene. I did the clouds. (Laughter, Iwanski) And a brick wall. And a bakery.

Fickey: And why is that a significant example to you?

Newman: That way you get to see what other artists are doing and you're always learning something new every day, no matter how old you get or how many years you've been doing it and you get to teach them and they get to teach you. So you're learning off each other and you talk to them and you find out what they're selling and what they're producing.

Fickey: And these murals, were they all outside on buildings?

Newman: No, inside.

Fickey: Okay, but was it meant for the community to be able to see them and enjoy them?

Newman: Yea and I was the only artist that I didn't paint my mural there. I did mine on wood. I did mine at home, because I had to take care of my grandma and I couldn't stay there and do it, so I did mine at home and then I brought it to them.

Fickey: Okay. I know of some artists who do that with murals, like the barn murals? They'll do the same thing. Paint it on different portions, yea. Well, so, let me as just really quickly. Just to bring everything back together, is there anything that we haven't talked about as far as the future of the craft industry here in eastern Kentucky, about, you know, the possibly closing of the craft store, is there anything else that's on your mind that I didn't think to ask about, that you think is important?

Newman: Well, the only thing that I can say is, if this place does close down, there isn't no other place in eastern Kentucky that markets the wares like they did.

Fickey: What do you mean by that?

Newman: Take it to other states and help people get into the Craft Market, stuff like that.

Fickey: And do you think that Appalachian Artisan Center or Red Bird Mission, maybe they need to step up their efforts to compensate?

Newman: They definitely need to step up. If they really want to help the crafters instead of just selling at their place, they need to step up and do just like the craft center did here. Take the crafter's wares to other states, to other shows and try to help the younger crafters coming up about the Craft Market and how to market their wares and everything.

Fickey: So, let me ask you a question Lewis, to you it's not a bad thing to have someone be a middle person that takes your product for you and takes it to a new market, you see that as a good thing.

Newman: Yea, I see it as a good thing because that gives you more time to work on your craft.

Fickey: Okay. That's a good point. Yea, it does. It gives you more time to produce. And Anna, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Hicks: No.

Fickey: Okay, is there anything else you'd like to say just about how important the craft program has been to you over the years, or?

Hicks: No.

Fickey: No? Okay. (Laughter, Fickey, Newman, Iwanski) As long as we've covered it. As long as you feel good. Ruth Ann, is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Newman: If it wasn't for the craft center, Sister Ruth Ann and Anna here, when I first started? I probably would have given up before now. So they're the ones that kept me going.

Fickey: Yea and so that something that's really needed in communities, right? A supportive group and an atmosphere that understands what you're trying to do. So that's maybe going to

be one of the largest losses if the craft shop isn't open or there's no real craft program then that will be a huge loss. Well, I agree with you that some of these other organizations can step up and fill that void. Is there something you were going to add to that, Lewis?

Newman: No.

Fickey: Okay, well then we will go ahead and wrap up for today and thank you so much for sitting down and sharing your thoughts and your experiences with us. We appreciate it.

Iwanski: Thank you.

Newman: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW