

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Lester Pross

November 16, 2007

Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: We are officially recording, and thank you very much for participating in this thing, truly appreciate it.

PROSS: Oh, I will be glad to be able to **[Chuckles – Willihnganz]**.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, let's just sort of go through here, the questions and then, as you feel moved to, you can make further comments and just let me know any other avenues you want to pursue; that will be perfectly fine.

PROSS: Mm-mm, fine.

WILLIHNGANZ: And people, when they're watching these sorts of things, always like somebody who is a little more animated, so, the more animation you have, the better. **[Laughter – PROSS]**

PROSS: Well, I'll do my best.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. First, I'd just sort of like to get a feel for you as an artist, crafts person, whatever your area was, so maybe you could tell me about what your particular activities have been in that area.

PROSS: Well, I've been a teacher, really, rather than a producing artist. I sometimes wished that it could have been the other way around, but one has to have bread and butter and maybe a little soup now and then, but the . . .

WILLIHNGANZ: Excuse me, I am going to have to make one alteration as I look in the picture, I have made one mistake, and that is I got this a little too low. I need to release **[unintelligible]**, I'm sorry to do this to you. I need to get that top so we don't get the glare of your glasses. Now, let's see what I've got here, in terms of the picture. Oh that's, that's ten times better. Now I can see your eyes, yeah **[Chuckling]**, yeah. If you can actually turn your chair just a little this way, that's it, that's even better. Okay I'm sorry. Go ahead; we're still recording, so just tell me some more about you.

PROSS: I think that I've always wanted to be an artist. Now what an artist is...it's something else again, but when people asked me when I was little, what I wanted to be, that was the answer. I don't ever remember anything else. I didn't want to go deep sea diving or flying in airplanes or helicopters in those days, I suspect that it started when my mother gave me something to do when I was oh, maybe four years old, line of little

bottles full of water and some crepe paper of different colors, which bled those colors when you put it in water, and I ended up with a great line, I remember it, in the sunshine on the floor, of bottles of wonderfully colored water. And I think that that may have been the first experience with visual excitement. Went on from there, of course, I drew; I painted. They gave me crayons and water colors, a wonderful support for these visual experiences that I made. I still got some of those drawings that Mom kept. Well, school was just as supportive, and there were always exciting things to do in class or outside of class, pictures to illustrate stories that we wrote. [Loud dog barking sounds] Calendars that the fourth grade teacher let me make during the noon hour when I was sort of snowbound in school. I couldn't go home for lunch, and the calendars, month after month, kept her going and kept me going too. That was fun. There were classes that were possible later on. I remember in the sixth grade, making some stain glass windows out of colored cellophane, King Arthur and his court, things like that. In junior high and high, there were great class's available and good teachers. So there was that support, and then we had a local artist who was doing murals in town. He had some drawing classes for the kids' evenings. What did it cost, maybe fifty cents an hour? There was a lot of money, but that was fun. When I got to college, of course there were other things that you did in college, but the art major was pretty definite. That started as a freshman with a wonderful course in art history that I didn't know very much about at that time. And then with painting and sculpture and all the rest of the things that go with a good basic art training. That led to a job at Berea College. I was very new at this kind of activity. I think I had a good background for what I was going to do, but there was lots more to it than I had ever dreamed. That started in 1946 and kept on going until I retired in '91. But I think I taught just about everything there was to teach during that time. The – part of the wonder, was working long enough to earn a sabbatical—a leave in which you went somewhere and did something which would supposedly make you a better teacher afterwards. The first time, was with a Fulbright Fellowship to the University of the Punjab in Pakistan. That was our first trip – my first trip and our first as a family, overseas, and going through Europe and some of the Middle East, on the way to Pakistan was a real adventure. You know, here were the things, which I had seen in books and written about, and talked about, and taught about, which were actual. Oh, certainly some times I had the idea that maybe it was like people who didn't really believe that men had gone to the moon. Was it there, or was it something somebody had made up? But they were there. So this real contact with the actuality of the arts was a wonderful part of that early experience. Another sabbatical took us to Egypt to teach at the American University in Cairo, and there're lots of stories to tell about that, but not, not right now. Another sabbatical took us to Japan with the University of Colorado immersing in Japanese culture and arts seminar, a wonderful year of having a different kind of experience. And then the last session overseas, in that respect, was a year teaching in Japan, at Kobe College. I remember giving a lecture one day I was going slowly, I thought, a sentence or two at a time, and then the young lady who was my translator spent about five minutes saying to the students what I had said. I've often wondered what she told them, but evidently it worked out very nicely (unintelligible), and since then other places that we have traveled have been the oh, what do I say, the impetus for new paintings. My own work moved pretty definitely, painting, both in oils

and watercolors early in the game, and that's where I've spent much of my artistic time. Now that's a big nutshell, but . . .

WILLIHNGANZ: Whoa, that's great! That's terrific. Would you consider yourself – do you consider yourself a success as an artist?

PROSS: Hum, I suppose that depends on what you mean by a success. In terms of making things that satisfy me yes, not entirely, there're lots of things that still aren't satisfactory, still need working. Some of them I'm very proud of. I haven't sold a lot of things, a few, now and then, that's a satisfaction. But I certainly wouldn't say that that has been the places, that has been the place where I have been a success. I think perhaps more as a teacher, than as a producer. Some of my students have been successful – are successful as artists and as teachers, and certainly as people in whatever professions they have chosen, because the teaching part of it has been broad in the history, in the relationship between music and literature and the visual arts. There I think, perhaps I have had some successes. A few letters come now and then and say that they are appreciative of what they did as students, and that's a comfort. So, maybe there is a success.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now you said, you taught just about everything. Could you be a little more specific? ***[Laughter – Willihnganz and Pross]***

PROSS: Yeah, well I came to Berea to teach drawing and painting. So I have continued in both of those areas, general art history courses, yes, and sort of depending on the experiences we've had overseas, I developed classes in the arts in India, and Islam Asian art generally I taught design and lettering layout and calligraphy, some art education, in the course of a wonderful humanities class that all of our students had, some dipping into sculpture and ceramics, but certainly not as a, as a proper artist. The emphasis has been with drawing and painting, and with the history of the arts, and history, of course, is a broad term that involves culture, religion, politics—all of it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Whoa! Let's talk perhaps a little bit about the Kentucky Guild for Artists or Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. How did you first learn about the Guild?

PROSS: Well, that was almost half century ago and memories sometimes get a little vague, but I remember some of those early times quite vividly. There was an idea in Louisville, with Virginia Minish who was an enamel crafts person, and some of her friends in business and in politics, that there needed to be something in this state to bring the artists together and to provide something for sale in the state park shops which wasn't made in China, or some other place. The State Department of Economic Development was interested in this, and I think it was probably they who called a

meeting at Shakertown in late 1960 to discuss the possibilities. Berea College was contacted because of its long time experience in the crafts and the craft industries and because the chairman of the Industrial Arts Department and I from the Art Department were the logical people to begin conversations with. We were invited to that meeting. I think someone from the L & N Railroad was there, because there was the idea of the possibility of a train that might go around the state to find out what, if any, crafts were already being made which might fill this very big gap, and which might also culturally take some information about the arts and experience with them to people where that wasn't available at that time.

WILLIHNGANZ: So the train was actually, that idea was actually right there at the first meeting.

PROSS: I think so, I think so, or otherwise the railroad man wouldn't have been there **[Laughing]**. So, the combination of people involved with the arts, like Rude Osolnick and me the state Department of Economic Development with Paul Hadley working strongly at it, and the L & N who were willing to make some provisions of cars for whatever, developed. It was either late in '60 or early in '61 when artists and crafts people from all over the state were invited to a meeting in Louisville to establish the Guild, to make it an entity. All of my records have gone to the archives at Berea College. So what my memory is not going to provide, anybody who wants to know more can go digging in the files because that's a good place for them. Well anyway, there was an organization established with a proper charter, and charter members, founders, probably, oh, fewer than a dozen of us who were involved in that legality. This is something that Governor Bert Combs was very interested and supportive of too, from the beginning, and with the... the state support and with the promises from businesses around the state to contribute, particularly when the idea of the training developed, got us going. The board was a broad one. There were maybe oh, eight or ten people on it, representing the railroads, the state, the crafts people, the colleges and universities. We operated pretty much in the normal way, headquarters in Berea, because that was fairly central and convenient. My job as the first president was to pretty much coordinate the efforts that were being made statewide to get things going. A lot of people were involved, and I probably didn't do much teaching those first couple of years, because it kept me busy being in contact with all sorts of folks and trying to see that things happened as they were supposed to. They did! We had a, had a great time doing it and I keep thinking that they were heady years, in there was the excitement of starting something new, of being involved with well, the powers that be, and watching the procedures of government and business. And it was quite a revelation for a fellow like me, but it was, as I say, an exciting time and a productive time and after a couple of years **[Chuckling]**; it was sufficient. So I sort of backed off for a while and tended to my academic business, but the contacts with the Guild I have kept, sometimes more actively than others, ever since. So, there is another nutshell of the... of the beginnings. There were lots of good people involved and lots of exciting possibilities, some of which panned out, and some didn't.

WILLIHNGANZ: Was there a lot of energy around this . . .

PROSS: Oh yes!

WILLIHNGANZ: being established.

PROSS: Yes, all kinds, and especially with the train because there was nothing quite like it anywhere else. The L & N gave us two cars, and I remember the day that they came off the main line onto a spur at Berea. One of them was absolutely just off its run, and there were **[Chuckling]** stiff chicken bones on the floor **[Chuckling]** as we went in to see what we'd inherited. There was a passenger car and a baggage car and these were converted, one of them into a, an exhibition car for changing shows, and another one into a demonstration car with the looms, and potters wheels and lathes and things of that sort, so the people who came to visit, especially school kids, could try their hands at what was being exhibited in the other car. There was also a small apartment in one end for the director to live in as these two cars went around the state with the blessings of, of the various railroads who operated then. They took them without charge.

WILLIHNGANZ: Whoa!

PROSS: They'd park in the community for maybe a week or ten days and kids and other people would come in from all around, both to see and to experiment themselves.

WILLIHNGANZ: Whoa, that's exciting stuff!

PROSS: That was fun, and that went on for almost eight years, until there was a change of administration in the state government, and the new administration had other priorities, so the money was diverted, and the train, well, it closed. I am not sure what happened to it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Hum. Are there pictures around of the train?

PROSS: Oh yes, yes, all kinds of them. And they are in the, some of them in the archives too. Warren Brunner, a Berea photographer who was with us from the beginning, has a wonderful archive of the train pictures. We had a, what shall I say? Well, was it monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly? Anyway, a newsletter, a Guild newsletter, which kept things up to date and was well illustrated. The state's public relations

system were very helpful to us too, that we had all kinds of national publicity not just the local kind, but the word got around, and other, other states eventually established their own traveling versions, not quite like ours, of course, but, as they needed them.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, in the early years, who were some of the, the people who were central to getting the, the Guild going?

PROSS: I'd say that Virginia Minish was probably the prime mover of this. She was a crafts person herself. She had boundless energy. She had ties and associations, which were very, very useful, you know, with railroad presidents and governors and people like that. Virginia kept her, I don't want to say kept her fingers on, but kept in touch with all aspects of the development of the Guild and we exchanged correspondence by the ream about what was happening and how it could be better. Paul Hadley from the State Department of Economic Development, which later became the Department of Commerce, and his associates were very active, of course in pushing this. It needed to be a success from a political point of view, and the... the railroad people were extremely helpful. I mean the major gift of two cars for example, and the facilities for converting one of them from a baggage car to a shop, and then to move this thing around all over the state was and I am not going to remember names however right now, but the intention of producing things for sale in the Guild shops – I mean in the state park shops, didn't necessarily come through as we had anticipated. There were some crafts people working, their production processes were limited, they couldn't make things by tens of thousands. **[Chuckling]** It reminded me of a of a situation in a Pakistani village, where they made shoes, wonderfully decorated in gold embroidering leather shoes for use in the **[Chuckling]** in the sandy dusty villages. The story was that a person from a big U. S. company came one time and asked if they could make some shoes for sale in America, and they said, they'd be glad to. How many would you want? Well, a hundred thousand pair? **[Chuckling]** One by one, by hand would not have worked out very well and it was sort of that way here too. So there needed to be some education, technically and business wise to the crafts people, how better to craft their products, of how to do it economically, how to get them to market. So, along with everything else that the Guild was doing, there was this educational process for the crafts person. Marketing was a big part of it. There were a number of individual craft centers established. These were both for production and for sales, so there were new entrepreneurs established.

WILLIHNGANZ: So who paid for establishing these centers?

PROSS: M-m-most if not all of our support in those early days came from the state, the Department of Economic Development, because this was the direction they were interested in.

WILLIHNGANZ: Were you selling craft goods off of the train?

PROSS: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: That was strictly for display and . . .

PROSS: Strictly . . .

WILLIHNGANZ: as a way . . .

PROSS: educational.

WILLIHNGANZ: educational.

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. But the crafts centers were much more clearly designed to promote . . .

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: the different individual crafts people.

PROSS: Yes, and to sell. There were two Guild outlets established, one of them in a new mall in Louisville. I think it was probably the first mall that was built there, and then another one, another shop in Lexington, which functioned until not too many years ago. Both of these, they sold only Kentucky products and Guild-authorized, Guild agreed-upon qualities, designs, and so forth. There are other systems now that have taken, taken over from these, but this was part of the beginnings.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, at some point, the... the Guild started basically jurying members . . .

PROSS: Yes!

WILLIHNGANZ: to come in, now, I would assume that that would not be true when they were starting out.

PROSS: It was.

WILLIHNGANZ: It was!

PROSS: It was . . .

WILLIHNGANZ: Right from the start.

PROSS: from the very beginning. You could join as a producing member; you could join as a friend or as a patron. You didn't have to be a, an artist or a craftsman, crafts person [Chuckling], to be involved with the Guild. But to have your work sold in the Guild shops, or considered for production you needed to pass the, the jury, and we had a jury from the very beginning, and a fairly clear set of qualities qualifications. And that's still, still the case. We got little stickers with the, the map of the state, (unintelligible) I remember in gold, and these could go on the objects, which had passed muster. Yeah, this was very much a concern, because the things for sale in the art shops, then were not necessarily of very good quality, were just, weren't available. So I think that this urgency on a high quality, a high standard from the start has produced where we are now, and certainly Kentucky crafts as the Artisan Center in Berea demonstrates, takes second place to nobody.

WILLIHNGANZ: Certainly within the state, that would be undeniable. Now, at the time the Guild was formed, were there other active artists and crafts associations?

PROSS: A handful. There was one in Louisville; I think there was one in Lexington. I don't remember any others, but these were local and for, for the interest of local people. They didn't have any outside interest, particularly. But they came in with us from the start as very supportive, and provided all kinds of assistance. So [Chuckling] the answer is yes, but they weren't very many. Others were established in, in areas in Berea, for example, of the local artists and crafts people, got together for the local chapter of the KGAC, and has happened probably more in college or universities settings than otherwise.

WILLIHNGANZ: And roughly speaking, the, the train was the first eight years of the Guild's history.

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: When did the, the centers, the retail centers basically, open up, for craft?

PROSS: Very soon probably within the first couple of years. The **[Chuckling]** – they needed to get going for [Chuckling] political purposes as much as for economic ones. Most of them unfortunately did not survive, and I'm not sure, really why. Perhaps it was the withdrawal of state support as that was for the train. Maybe they just were not able to produce quantity and quality to survive economically. I don't know.

WILLIHNGANZ: And there was a, a big push I believe in the arts-crafts area, when John Y. Brown was the governor, and his wife. Do you recall this?

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: How did that impact the Guild?

PROSS: I can't really answer that because at that point, I was not actively involved. I **[Chuckling]** thought in some ways that I had done my duty **[Chuckling]** and needed to go on to other things. So I maintained a membership, I stayed with the board for a number of years, but then sort of pulled away. I paid my dues, stayed in touch, but not actively, and those were the years that I, I can't really tell you about.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. You were the first president?

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: So this was the first year it was established after that first meeting?

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. How long were you the president then?

PROSS: For two years. That was sufficient **[Laughter – Pross and Willihnganz]**. I had my excitement. **[Chuckling]** At any rate it was great. I'm awfully glad to have, had

that kind of experience and to be useful if I was, but I, I did have a job to do. I needed to clear out some of the desk drawers from the Guild business and get back to work.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, any organization that lasts forty-seven years, I guess it is forty-six years, had to have had a good start **[Laughter – Pross]** . . .

PROSS: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: or they wouldn't have gotten that far.

PROSS: Well, it did and it's had an awful lot of good people in the meantime. It's had its ups and downs, but it, it hangs on. We were rather indefinite at the beginning with the name of this organization. You know there are so many artsy-craftsy movements around that we wanted this to be a Guild of people, artists and craftsmen, and **[unintelligible]** came politically proper to deal with crafts people, or something like that rather than craftsmen, we decided maybe to keep the title, it was a good one. It had a had, its basis.

WILLIHNGANZ: But you haven't, you haven't changed it, it's what you're saying.

PROSS: No, that's right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

PROSS: No it's still the original one with its emphasis on the people.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm-mm, okay. When, when you were there as a, as the president of this organization, were there changes that you initiated that, and that changed the, the direction or the focus of the group?

PROSS: That I myself initiated? I don't think so. The board was how shall I say it? We didn't fuss and fume and argue; we were all pretty much of a mind. We got along well together. We knew where we were going and tried to go there. And I'm not sure that I can even recall any particular crisis in those early days that demanded major decisions. It was all we could do sometimes to **[Chuckling]** to keep the state from running away with good ideas that we thought would be hard to manage in the long run, and I can't be specific, but there were, there was I think an acknowledgement of what we were able to do as an organization, and what somebody else might do beyond that,

so let them go and do their thing, let us do what we think we can do effectively and efficiently. The establishment of the fairs was a good dimension. I think the first one was in the triangle across from Boone Tavern in Berea; just a few tables that people set up and had a few wares to sell. I remember having some little watercolors for a couple of bucks. Nobody bought them, but anyways, there they were. When the train stopped, the fairs, which by that time were pretty well established, were our main source of income. All the state support vanished and so we had to make our own money, and fairs with admission and percentages is what we had for a number of years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Was the railroad company still providing transportation for the train?

PROSS: Well the train was gone.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh the train was gone, that's right.

PROSS: I think by contract, the cars reverted to the ownership of the state when, when the Guild was no longer functioning with them, and I don't know what happened to them.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see.

PROSS: So **[Chuckling]** the train went, the money went, and we were on our own, and the fairs were – and the shops – were the only sources of income, plus membership.

WILLIHNGANZ: How many members did you have over the years?

PROSS: I think probably three or four hundred in the early years, I'm not sure if it went above that. It may have gone to five hundred somewhere along the line. I don't know what it is now. But it was a lot of people to keep up with, and that was part of my job, just through communication.

WILLIHNGANZ: Then has that number gone significantly down as the years have gone by?

PROSS: I don't know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

PROSS: I haven't been that close to the **[Chuckling]** to the records.

WILLIHNGANZ: Just as we are sitting here and as I am listening to you, you know, it, it seems to me that there's a kind of an interesting parallel – I'm just sort of throwing this idea out – between the, the farmer's market movement and the arts movement, where arts originally were of course just of the people, they did this to survive, they needed a, they needed a basket so they wove one and they used it and that's what it was for, and then it became an art form. And what we have with the farmers of course is they are all getting out-produced by these huge conglomerates and the actual small farm farmers are becoming fewer and far between and they are setting up these farmers markets, much as you set up the Guild shops to sell their products. And often time of course, they're selling them together, because I go to the Saint Matthews Art Fair or farmers market and there is quite a few crafts booths in there among the vegetables . . .

PROSS: Sure.

WILLIHNGANZ: ...and everything else. It's kind of an interesting parallel there . . .

PROSS: Mm-mm, mm-mm, mm-mm.

WILLIHNGANZ: in terms of in terms of what's going on with the culture.

PROSS: Yeah. Well the need, I think, the people feel for being together, and for doing things that are productive and satisfying. I mean you can raise a beautiful tomato, or a zucchini, and there is a pleasure and satisfaction in that, not just in the eating but **[Chuckling]** you know, in the having of this wonderful thing in your hand.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm-mm. After you ceased being the president, you were on the board for a number of years?

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

PROSS: How many? I, I don't remember, probably not too many, three or four, I guess? And then time for somebody else to deal with it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm-mm. As the seventies and the eighties and the nineties went by there have been other organizations, artists, organizations founded and grown in this state. What role did the Guild play in terms of encouraging artistic expression and crafts production?

PROSS: Well I think that the fairs would have had quite a bit to do with that, as people saw what was being done, what other people were doing, and thought that maybe they could too, even for the fun of it, if not for any economic reasons. They would go ahead. The, the fairs brought in sometimes ten thousand or more visitors over a weekend. These were bigger fairs out at the Indian Ford Theater in Berea, one in the spring and one in the fall. There were workshops that were established and I'm not sure how effective they were, but as, as groups of people wanted something like this, the, the Guild hoped to be prepared to, to service, as the train came back to communities with a longer stay and with workshops that helped. **[Door bell ringing sound]** How much more there was . . .

[Extremely Loud dog-barking sounds]

WILLIHNGANZ: We will take a break here for just a moment **[Chuckling]**.

[Commotion]

PROSS: **[unintelligible]** on that. **[Unintelligible]** a second, just one second.

[Commotion]

WILLIHNGANZ: **[Whispers]** yeah, well we're **[unintelligible]** chair but I'll do that for the next interview. Okay. I think we are under control again **[Chuckling]**.

PROSS: Good.

WILLIHNGANZ: Has there been any competition for resources and recognition among the different artists and crafts organizations in the state of Kentucky?

PROSS: Not that I am aware of as, as the Guild matured, and perhaps weakened from time to time, I'm sure that other organizations moved to fill the gaps, but I can't give you

chapter and verse on any of this, and as I gradually pulled out from the activity there, my friends in the colleges and the universities who had been among the establishers of this, retired, or died. It was, well it didn't have the same excitement of statewide interest that the Guild had had at the beginning, but I think that probably regional or local organizations grew and developed. Then maybe that's sufficient **[Chuckling]**. Again, I'm not able to speak from personal experience. The other statewide organization which, which helped at the beginning, was the Kentucky Art Educators Association. That may not be the exact name that we had, but this was I think the only statewide arts group besides the Guild that existed, and I'm not sure that they exist anymore.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm-mm, okay. What do you think motivated people to be members of a Guild and what did they get out of their membership?

PROSS: They got a kind of standing, I think as part of something which was exciting and important, not only state wide but nationally, because there was a, a status then, and the... the state with its public relations systems had a lot to do with that. Time Magazine, for example, acknowledges and had a nice article one time, maybe twice. That, and there was a sense of belonging and of association with others who were interested in the same things you were, and perhaps now that's the, one of the most important reasons for belonging. It certainly doesn't provide great outlets for income. The fairs are not what they used to be, if they exist. But they have a chance to meet at least once a year with somebody who is doing the same thing as you are, interested in the same thing as you are, that's important.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you still keep in touch with a lot of the folks that you knew through the guild?

PROSS: Not as much as I used to, with a few, yes, especially those near by. Let's say I am a survivor. There aren't many of them anymore, and those who are still around are sometimes hard to find.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. What do you think is the likely future of the Kentucky Guild?

PROSS: Well I'd, I hesitate to say, even to think about it. It has come back from the dead a number of times, and can do that, but it's well I, I'm just not sure I can say where we would want to go. I can hope, and I hope that it does find some, some kind of incarnation which will keep it going, and it probably needs a reincarnation. I'm not even sure of what its current situation is, even though it's in my own hometown.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm always kind of fascinated by art fairs, and I've gone to a lot of them over the years with my wife and family, and what not. We have, of course, the Saint James Art Fair, which is huge in Louisville, and quite a few others, actually and we attend a lot of them. But I'm sort of curious what a person has been in, closer involved in this than I am, thinks about the whole movement toward juried art fairs.

PROSS: I think it's probably wise. There are fairs that are open to all comers and that's nice. But it's often the case that people who are producing, I have to be careful of the word – quality crafts and arts they choose not to participate here where anything goes for whatever **[Chuckling]** disqualification it may make, of their own work and so I think that the necessity at least in certain fairs of high standards is essential, and that's what all our fairs try to produce. I've got some reservations about current standards, but then I've got to realize that twenty-seven (2007) is not 1960, and tastes change, needs change, materials change. We need to acknowledge where we are in the state of the world, but, basic qualities don't change much. The integrity of the piece, its well, use of materials, its fineness of design, all of this matter and something which we will take all comers doesn't quite fill that bill. Now, one of the Guild standards committees' procedures has always been the offering of assistance to applicants for improving their work. Some of them have taken us up on that, others have gone away, but it's been important to the Guild, at least on paper, to maintain the highest of standards.

WILLIHNGANZ: Mm-mm. There is sort of... a certain of people who go for crafts works that are beautiful, and thoughtful, and inventive, and innovative, and there are other people who actually collect crafts work because it reflects indigenous culture, and I'm wondering how you see the Guild in those terms? Was this more oriented toward quality?

PROSS: The quality in indigenous culture, a chair maker, for example, can throw together a, a chair that's good for sitting in, you know, but that's all. But one, who very lovingly deals with his wood, and his care with the refinements of comfort, can be indigenous but can be a fine craftsman. So it's not just what ...what can be tossed out for everyday use, or what can be at the same time a well-made object.

WILLIHNGANZ: Hum. Okay. I think that's probably covered most of what I wanted to talk about. Are there any other things you'd like to add?

PROSS: Well, I think we've **[Chuckling]** covered a lot of territory, especially the early days, I guess what I have come to be in lots of ways is the voice of history, and this **[Chuckling]** isn't the only time that my brains have been picked while they were, while they were still pick-able, but as I said, I've forgotten an awful lot that I shouldn't and I'm glad to have this chance to recollect and perhaps to recollect accurately, what for me were pretty exciting days in my life.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's wonderful. Thank you.

PROSS: Thanks for the *[unintelligible]* *[Chuckles – Willihnganz]*, nice to talk with you.

WILLIHNGANZ: Nice to talk with you. Okay, let me tur . . .

[End of recording.]