

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

**Interview with Jim and Nancy Wright**

**August 12, 2008**

**Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz**

WILLIHNGANZ: This is Greg Willihnganz. I'm interviewing Jim and Nancy.

NANCY WRIGHT: Wright.

JIM WRIGHT: Wright.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wright. Sorry, at the Artisan Center in Berea, Kentucky on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008 for the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association. Okay, why don't you each chime in whenever you feel comfortable, and you can add to each other's, or speak for yourselves, or respond however you wish.

JIM WRIGHT: No hitting. **[All laugh.]**

WILLIHNGANZ: To open us up, just give me in a sentence or so...tell me what it is you do.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, we make pottery, primarily. And rather than going into the sculpture end, I'm a container maker. I make containers, coffee, tea, beer, garlic, apples, oranges, **[Jim Wright laughs]**....

NANCY WRIGHT: Flowers.

JIM WRIGHT: Vegetables. But I, I limit it to container making, pretty much, as opposed to sculpture.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

NANCY WRIGHT: I make **[unintelligible]** pots and I make jewelry out of porcelain.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah, okay, so you're a jewelry maker as well as...

NANCY WRIGHT: I was. I'm not doing that much anymore. I've gone mainly to making the hanging **[unintelligible]** pots, because I like carving, and I put, like, dried flowers and.....

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Are you folks from Kentucky? Were you born here?

NANCY WRIGHT: No.

JIM WRIGHT: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh.

JIM WRIGHT: I was born and grew up in Illinois. You were born in....

NANCY WRIGHT: ...in Indiana....

JIM WRIGHT: And grew up all over.

NANCY WRIGHT: And grew up in New Mexico.

WILLIHNGANZ: Ah. Okay.

JIM WRIGHT: We met at the University of Illinois.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see. In Champaign-Urbana?

JIM WRIGHT: I asked her out for coffee.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's where my wife got her PhD.

JIM WRIGHT: Oh yeah.

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, we were there five years, just before we moved to Kentucky.

NANCY WRIGHT: I was there about a year and a half.

JIM WRIGHT: I was there about six years. **[All laugh]** It took me a while. Well, I spent a little time in the army too, but...

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Tell me about your growing up, and how that affected what you do.

JIM WRIGHT: **[Jim Wright laughs]** I didn't know anything about pottery. When I, I saw a demonstration on a Saturday afternoon, Industry on Parade, and some of those old...they just filled in after the ball games, or so, and the guy was making pottery. And it looked, I mean, on the wheel, it looked interesting. And then, well, I got into college and needed an elective, and, well, I was in the art department, but needed an art elective. And so, pottery was one of them, and I kind of liked it then. And then, I went into the Army, and then I came back, took another pottery class, met Nancy. And then I, well, I got a job in Albuquerque, and she was working, and she was teaching. I got a job at the military base. I was their crafts director and so I, I spent a lot of time in the pottery shop there. Then, I decided to go back, get a Masters in it. Except, I did pottery and jewelry. I was into silver and jewelry. But then, the Hump Brothers got into the silver market, and silver prices went way up. And so we kind of, just sort of gave up on the silver and stuck with clay. That's the story of my life.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, Nancy?

NANCY WRIGHT: Well, I grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. One of our leaders for the scout troop was an archaeologist. Her husband...and she had worked in Choco Canyon for years and years and years. And, after they had three children they decided that that wasn't the best place for education for their three children. So they, the wife moved to Albuquerque, and she became a scout leader. And, mine...and she took us to the lovely Indian ruins, and told us about the archaeology, and what various things were for. And, of course, we saw the pottery shards, and that interested me. And, I liked the different colors that you could get from different clays. And so, I just had always liked that. And, I liked the designs that Indians put on their pottery. I liked the hand-built things. And when I took the pottery course, Jim learned to throw, **[Jim Wright laughs]** and I got a husband. I never did learn to throw pottery. It just wasn't me. **[Wright and Willihnganz laugh.]** So I make hand-built things, and I got interested in making different colored things. I made beads for a while. Jodi Bollum had, hand made beads, and I really liked that. And, used the lost art of the Egyptians with the, the paste, and put different colors together to make different colored of beads. And, that was an interesting thing. I did a series of five articles for the **[unintelligible]** Journal on Bead Making and Colorings, and that was fun. But, that gets kind of tiresome after a while, and so then I decided to make porcelain jewelry. And, I had gone to a course at Anderson, Indiana, with china painting. And, I was one of the younger ones there. I was in my fifties, but the others were in their seventies and eighties. We were on one side of the, of the room, and the Indianapolis Colts were on the other. **[Nancy Wright laughs.]** But in the meantime I found some interesting glazes and techniques from the china painting, and applied that to some of the porcelain and jewelry. That was fun for a while but.... **[Jim Wright laughs]**

JIM WRIGHT: I guess I'm lucky to still be around. (Laughter - all).

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah. **[Nancy Wright laughs.]**

JIM WRIGHT: She's easily bored.

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, you have both had a fair amount of training actually, in your craft. Did either of you apprentice with anyone?

NANCY WRIGHT: No. He did, sort of. Well, I guess Nicholas Ridgett.

JIM WRIGHT: He was my thesis advisor.

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah. But...

JIM WRIGHT: There weren't that many craftsmen, you know, working full-time making a living then, other than teaching. At that time, and that was in the early mid-sixties or so, and it just, there wasn't anyone to apprentice with so, **[Jim Wright laughs]** ...and

made a lot of mistakes. **[Jim Wright laughs]** Still do, but that's why it's an art and not a science.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

JIM WRIGHT: And I have taught a few ceramic engineers and yet, conflicting, **[Jim Wright laughs]** they each have their own ideas about how things work. And it doesn't always work that way.

NANCY WRIGHT: In the seventies was a time to be a full-time artist with the, the Berea Craft Festivals and the Kentucky Guild, because the attendance was really wonderful, sales were really wonderful, and there weren't so many. There wasn't a craft fair every weekend.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I guess we're wondering about continuing education experiences you might have. Are you currently going, or have you recently gone to workshops, or development programs or....

JIM WRIGHT: I haven't. I, those weekend things where they...I just, with the clay...you do it. It has to dry. So, it seems like kind of a waste of my time and theirs too. But, we go to fairs. We've talked to other potters, you know, "Well, something's not going right, here. What am I doing wrong," you know. And that's essentially where I keep up with things. And we occasionally subscribe to a year or two, and then we see some prize winner with a cracked candle or something, and I think, "God." So, **[Jim Wright laughs]** it's just, my best method is just talking to other potters at fairs, where we're trying to sell things too, but, there's always a little time where we shoot the bull.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you traveled internationally, and has that affected your art?

NANCY WRIGHT: We've traveled internationally but not, not especially.

JIM WRIGHT: We've been to Juarez when we were in **[Jim Wright laughs]** New Mexico, and we took a trip to Ireland a few years ago.

NANCY WRIGHT: We went to Winnipeg, Canada. Was interesting.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, we lived in South Dakota for a while. Went to Winnipeg, so in the Army, I'm in Japan, Korea, and some of those places. But I, other than seeing things on shop shelves, I didn't visit any potters or anything like that.

NANCY WRIGHT: I, I did go to several little craft marketing workshops for marketing your product, and set up design and....

JIM WRIGHT: That was the business end.

NANCY WRIGHT: Business end. And they had several, which were very helpful.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, and would you describe your art works as primarily functional, or more aesthetic or pleasing to the senses?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, I try to get 'em both in. I have a functional item and I, I decorate more, more than a lot of potters do. I mean, I, I use, maybe not glazes always, but colored clays, and then pour through those various designs. I think they look more like wrought iron, some of the things I'm doing, than just drawings of wrought iron fences and gates. Some people call them all sorts of things, but, anyway I, I do use glazes, and glazes over glazes, and you get runny, uncontrollable, or I can't control 'em anyway. Sometimes, they stick to the shelf. And, I'm in there with a hammer and chisel. But anyway, I, I like where I know what's going to happen, and a lot of, its more kind consuming maybe, but I feel like I can do it and temperamentally. I can do that kind of stuff. I'm not real fast, **[Jim Wright laughs]** but I do what I do. So I do.

WILLIHNGANZ: What would you say....

NANCY WRIGHT: Ours are functional, to answer your question. **[Jim Wright laughs]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

JIM WRIGHT: Forgot your question.

NANCY WRIGHT: With pleasing designs on them.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, what are the major influences on then, content of your work?

JIM WRIGHT: I don't know. **[Jim Wright laughs]** That content...

NANCY WRIGHT: I guess it sales based primarily since, that's our primary income. Whatever sells is what we make.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you been able to basically sustain your work through your work? You haven't had to have a day job?

NANCY WRIGHT: I have worked; I started back to work when health insurance got so exorbitant, so I went to work part-time in a department store so we could have insurance.

JIM WRIGHT: **[unintelligible]**

NANCY WRIGHT: Mmm, mmm.

WILLIHNGANZ: **[Willihnganz laughs]** Do you have a studio in your home? Is that how you work?

NANCY WRIGHT: Yes.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, we kind of live in the studio. *[Jim Wright laughs]* Its, its, It's a old farmhouse, about nine rooms and we live in about three. The rest of them, well...

NANCY WRIGHT: For pots.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, yeah, pots, boxes can ship with chipped pots. Things I don't throw away, because I know I'm going to need them sooner or later. And then, pots, wet, dry, ready to be fired, ready to be packed. But, it's a mess really. But that's where we live. We're able to live and work in the same place. I couldn't imagine having to go to somewhere else to work.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you market your, your works?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, we go to the wholesale market, and the crafts, what marketing puts on. And we get, usually, wholesale orders that are kind of revolving things, and then we go to a few outdoor fairs which are primarily retail. Once a month someone will, you'll pick up a wholesale order there. But, and of course, as we're getting older, we're getting slower, and the house is paid for. The kids are through school, cars are paid for, we don't need as much money now, so we don't work as hard, but we're still always busy. But, not that much to show for it, and now we have enough orders to keep us busy, but not enough that we feel so much pressure.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. You work alone or together?

NANCY WRIGHT: Alone.

JIM WRIGHT: More or less. Now, I'll fire her stuff when its ready but, and I'll see to it she has the clay she needs if she's not using porcelain, which she buys separately. But yeah, it's pretty much, we work independently.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What, what tools do you use in your craft?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, potters wheel and hands are the primary thing.

NANCY WRIGHT: Firewood kilns...we have gas kilns and electric kilns, both.

JIM WRIGHT: And little Exacto knife type things, which, I wound up making a lot of my own, 'cause I'll need a blade that's longer or thinner or so, so. You know, late at night I need something, and well, now that Wal-Mart's open 24-hours it helps. But I can, you know, usually make what I need at home, 'cause we live and work in the same spot.

NANCY WRIGHT: And we make clay stamps that we press into the clay so those are all handy.

WILLIHNGANZ: How would you describe your working process?

JIM WRIGHT: *[Jim Wright laughs]* I don't know. I just, well, you get up in the morning, putter around, and you'll spend the morning doing book work, or what. It's a lot of times noon or after, before I really start making pots. And then, it's just a matter of, if I've already got clay mixed up, which I try to have stuff on hand. It's just a matter of wedging it, sitting down at the wheel, making pots. And I tend to work into the night. Because it's just, I guess I'm kind of a night person. But, I try to get to bed by one or two. But, I don't always make that depending on how things are going.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you listen to music while you work?

NANCY WRIGHT: Watches TV.

JIM WRIGHT: No, I put the TV on, whatever.

NANCY WRIGHT: *[Nancy Wright laughs.]* He's not too particular...

JIM WRIGHT: No, I mean, I talk back to it. But I don't, ah, we've got satellite now, so each TV doesn't have a remote. And so, I've got a long handle thing so I can reach over and, *[Wright and Willihnganz laugh.]* so, anyway, we manage.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, when you start out making pots, do you have like a concept in your mind of what you're going to do, or do you put the clay on there and just start working with it?

JIM WRIGHT: It depends on what, what kind of orders we have. If we have you know, two dozen coffee cups, and I hate to make sets of things. I have to get really psyched up for that. And so, I'll make all the items where they want just one or two of something that doesn't have to match. Then when I do, when I get myself worked up to make a set, then I'll do that. And, of course, I have to measure the height and width, and what not. But, it's really not very structured the whole...or the way I work it. Now, if I could get some sort of organization, I think it would have been better. Thirty years ago it would have been better. But I haven't, so we've managed so far, so why change now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Nancy Wright, when you work, do you have like an idea ahead of time, or do you just sort of let it develop?

NANCY WRIGHT: Well, I, I make these containers to put the dried flowers in, so I have to make them different sizes to accommodate different flowers. And, I have clay stamps. And when I get tired of using some clay stamps, then I'll make other clay stamps to press into the clay. And then, I'll use iron oxide to put down in the impressions that are made by the clay stamps. And so, I just decide what sizes I need and go to it. And then, I have decided sometimes I don't want to use the clay stamps. And, I have used some of the luster-over glazes that will give an iridescent look to it, and it's an unusual thing. Its one of the things that I learned at Anderson...

JIM WRIGHT: Workshops.

NANCY WRIGHT: ...workshops, with the china painting, that the luster glazes are the gold and silver and platinum that surround your dishes, that you got from your wedding. It also comes in different colors. And they're just real unusual, different look. And so, I put that on some of them.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you get like orders from stores...

NANCY WRIGHT: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And so then, you just fill those orders. Do they specify what they want from them?

NANCY WRIGHT: Usually they just want so many at such a price, and so then, I leave it up to me how to do it. And the Artisan Center takes both, but the Shaker Village likes the...

JIM WRIGHT: The glazed ones.

NANCY WRIGHT: ...the iridescent look, the glazed ones. Yeah.

JIM WRIGHT: Usually the orders...they do leave quite a bit of discretion up to us. You know, they'll ask for a glazed or the unglazed but, you know, as far as color, what not, they're usually pretty...they leave that up to us, pretty much.

WILLIHNGANZ: What impact would you say technology has had on your work?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, for the last twenty, thirty thousand years not, I mean...

NANCY WRIGHT: The wheel and the kiln, that's about it.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, yeah. The kiln, some of them are electronically controlled now. Ours aren't. I prefer to go out there and peek through the keyhole, and look for the cone to bend. Some, I have seen some kilns that have over-fired, and they've all relied on automatic devices. **[Jim Wright laughs]** I hate rethinking myself, but I just, I would rather control it myself than count on a device that might fail. And I fail once in a while, but then it's me I can blame. I mean, it's not something else. The wheels, I, I started out with the kick wheel, and then it dawned on me that I spend half my time kicking, and half my time making the pot. So, we have electrical wheels now, but you know, if everything collapses, I've still got the kick wheel out in the garage.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Okay.

NANCY WRIGHT: And mine is just rolling it out with a rolling pin, which is pretty rudimentary. *[Nancy Wright laughs.]*

WILLIHNGANZ: And you have cutters that you use to cut out the...

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah. One of our friends does the cut outs and I...

JIM WRIGHT: She's a tinsmith.

NANCY WRIGHT: I design the shape and send it to her and Sandy Wallen, she's one of us. So, she makes the shape for me. I did with some of my old jewelry. A friend of mine gave me an old pizza, an old....

JIM WRIGHT: Pasta roller.

NANCY WRIGHT: Pasta maker, yeah, and I made the jewelry with a pasta maker.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you use any innovative or unique techniques in your work?

JIM WRIGHT: Other than the color, clay carving through, this is....

NANCY WRIGHT: Nobody else is doing it.

JIM WRIGHT: Yeah. Two thousand years ago that was pretty cool. But I mean, yeah, it's just...other than that, I keep reading about the Japanese and ceramic engine blocks, and ceramic knives. And I have absolutely no idea how they're doing that, because most of the ceramic I'm familiar with, it's a little abrasive. I mean, no matter how well you smooth it, its, its *[unintelligible]* sharpening zones. The knives I, I hear do chip. But, they retain an edge until they chip, but how that's done I have no idea.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Workmen.

NANCY WRIGHT: Oh, Jerry?

WILLIHNGANZ: No, not Jerry, a workman. Okay, found another way to get where he's going. Okay, do you exhibit your work?

NANCY WRIGHT: Yes.

JIM WRIGHT: Here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Here.

JIM WRIGHT: Longhouse. What's the gallery in Richmond that moved? It used to be, used to be Chestnut's Big Gallery here. Contemporary, or traditional crafts gallery, or...

NANCY WRIGHT: No. Can't remember what he changed the name too.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, he moved and changed the name. I can't remember now. But, in Frankfort, then Completely Kentucky...

NANCY WRIGHT: Shaker Village

JIM WRIGHT: Shaker Village, well, those are all sales. I mean, as far as gallery type things, we don't do a whole lot of that.

NANCY WRIGHT: Then, we've got that Kentucky Parks.

JIM WRIGHT: Yeah, various...

WILLIHNGANZ: Through the stores yeah. Do you do the fairs?

NANCY WRIGHT: Yes.

JIM WRIGHT: That, well, we don't do everything now that we used to but...

NANCY WRIGHT: A lot of them are gone too. The three Berea fairs we used to do, but two of them are gone, and a third one is maybe going, if not gone.

JIM WRIGHT: Put that out in, in the woods. We like that. We have tried the downtown park, and don't like that very much. You know, they try, and everyone's very nice, but it's just not the same as being out in the woods, which, *[Jim Wright laughs]* is what we enjoy.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, how do you promote and sell your work then?

JIM WRIGHT: We really don't promote it very much.

NANCY WRIGHT: Well, we have a website. And we have some brochures that we have done for some time, but mainly through the Kentucky Craft Marketing.

JIM WRIGHT: And here, which I guess is part of the Crafts Marketing...but people will see something here and contact us, or they'll see something where we have a shop, but I...we...the advertising we've tried early on. We didn't feel, was that successful, and we've been able to keep busy without having to advertise a whole lot.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, you've said you have a website. Is that generating sales for you?

JIM WRIGHT: Not that I know of.

NANCY WRIGHT: No, we just got it. Our son-in-law did it for us.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, and this is a recent thing?

JIM WRIGHT: Yeah, just about two months or so?

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah.

JIM WRIGHT: It is a nice looking thing.

NANCY WRIGHT: Yes.

JIM WRIGHT: But, I mean, I really don't expect anything. I mean, how many billion websites are there out there. I mean, you know, I'm not worried.

WILLIHNGANZ: But, there are billions of people looking at those websites, millions of websites.

NANCY WRIGHT: And at southernartisty.org, we're in that. It's an Atlanta-based thing. There's a website for us, and we're under Wright Pottery for that, and our website is pelicanese.com, I think.

JIM WRIGHT: I'm not into computers, you know. I can run a wheel or a kiln. I like the art welders and all. I can't run a typewriter. ***[Nancy Wright laughs.]*** Never did get the hang of it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you gotten recognition for your work? Won awards, been in a show?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, ***[Jim Wright laughs]*** we're ***[unintelligible]***, but like somebody said, "All you have to do is be around long enough." ***[Wright and Willihnganz laugh.]***

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, which craft organizations do you actually belong to? There's the Kentucky Guild for Artists and Craftsmen.

JIM WRIGHT: Yeah.

NANCY WRIGHT: Well, we did for years until they just kind of went down hill.

JIM WRIGHT: I guess Craftsmart would be another one for that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Craftsmart?

JIM WRIGHT: And that's...I know we don't pay dues or go to meetings. We're just included in the group that, you know, goes to those little markets, so it's not like an active...

NANCY WRIGHT: Then at southernartistry.org, we don't pay dues to that either, but we are a part of it, and juried in. But, we were juried members for the Kentucky Guild for....

JIM WRIGHT: Thirty years or so.

NANCY WRIGHT: Thirty years, so.

WILLIHNGANZ: So were you, were you amongst the original people in the Guild?

JIM WRIGHT: No. We, we did...it was around about five years before we got here. We got to Kentucky in '69.

NANCY WRIGHT: '69.

JIM WRIGHT: Joined the Guild in the spring of '70 and...

NANCY WRIGHT: I think you joined the Guild in the fall of '69.

JIM WRIGHT: No, I don't think they had a, a jury...

NANCY WRIGHT: 'cause we were at the fair in 1970, and you needed to be juried in before you could do that.

JIM WRIGHT: Yeah, well, I think it was in early January.

NANCY WRIGHT: Maybe so.

JIM WRIGHT: **[Jim Wright laughs]** Well, whatever. Anyway, but, then they quit using the woods out there, and we just kind of drifted away from that. And so, I don't remember exactly when they started but they, they had...

NANCY WRIGHT: 1970.

JIM WRIGHT: ...but they had to train **[unintelligible]** and we weren't...

NANCY WRIGHT: I believe that was 1961.

JIM WRIGHT: Well, I think that had stopped by the time we joined, and Jerry Workman was involved in that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes, I've interviewed Jerry.

JIM WRIGHT: Oh. You've already talked with him.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I have talked with him. You subscribe to periodicals for your craft work?

NANCY WRIGHT: We did. We don't anymore. **[Jim Wright laughs]** When you get this old you've seen a good portion of them already, so.

JIM WRIGHT: And when we did, you know, the prize winner would have a cracked handle, or something like that, and that just really turned me off. And so, and I'd get mad. Well, I never cancelled the subscription, but I just wouldn't renew it. And then maybe five years later, I'd try again. And then, there'd be something that looked like a functional item, that you look at and decide, "No, that wouldn't work." So, no I don't. I go to shows. I look around. I go to other craft shops. I look around. That's about it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Are you involved in teaching or writing about your craft?

JIM WRIGHT: No more. We were both teachers, but that was a long time, about thirty-five years ago.

NANCY WRIGHT: Yeah, I did that series of articles, but that's all I've done since. I've, I've helped out with girl scouts, and Bible School, and things like that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Where did you teach?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, I started in South Dakota General **[unintelligible]** State College, which is now Dakota State. Then I spent a one-year, a visiting professorship at Evansville, University of Evansville. And then, I did four years at Eastern. And I was kindly informed that the tenure committee thought I might be happier somewhere else. And they were right. I have been happier since then. But, I taught in three places, and strange things happened. I really thought, "I'm just not cut out, **[Jim Wright laughs]** I wasn't meant to be a teacher". So, so, yeah. I, I'm, I'm happy with the way it turned out. A lot of my old colleagues have gray hair, and **[Nancy Wright laughs.]** they look like they're in worse shape than I am. **[Wright and Willihnganz laugh.]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What does it mean to you to have a career as an artist?

JIM WRIGHT: I, I never really thought a whole lot about it, I mean, you know. You got to do something. **[Jim Wright laughs]** I've been able to make pottery, and so that's what I've done. But, well, I have often said I wanted to be a soup farmer, but my crackers got wet. **[Willihnganz laughs]** And, I know exactly what I mean by that, but nobody else. But in high school, in physics, I could look at the diagrams and tell which way the wheels were turning. I was a snap at that. And then they'd say, "How many times?" Ugh. So, I mean, you know, I can chase that stuff, but the math I couldn't do. I thought I had the agility to be a surgeon, but I couldn't remember if it was feed a cold and starve a fever or, its, you know. Physically, I could do a lot of things. But I wouldn't, **[Jim Wright laughs]** couldn't, conquer the mental part. So, I wound up as a potter, where you didn't have to be too bright. It would help, I think. But, you can survive without being too bright.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you seen a lot of changes in the public's relationship to crafts over the years?

JIM WRIGHT: I don't know whether it was that I noticed them, or whether it has changed, but it seems like people do, do, they're more interested. They know more about it, and whether it was always that way, and I just didn't realize there were people that interested or what. But yeah, I think over the last few years. How about you? You...

NANCY WRIGHT: People have always been interested in Indian pottery, and of course, that was where I grew up so. There had always been, an, an awe feeling of hand-crafted things, and I can remember looking at some of the... *[unintelligible]* that would be in the pawn shops that the Indians had made. And, some of them didn't want to take any paper money. But, they would accept silver dollars. And then, they'd melt down the silver dollars and make these wonderful *[unintelligible]* and turquoise, and other things in them.

WILLIHNGANZ: And take back more of your silver dollars. *[Wright and Willihnganz laugh.]*

NANCY WRIGHT: Right and so, yeah, I was always aware of handcrafted things, and my grandmother was a weaver. And, I had always appreciated handcrafted things. I had a grandmother, sort of a grandmother, step-grandmother, I guess you would call her, who was a quilter. And, I just knew that some people were very talented and could do things that other people couldn't, and I wanted to be able to do something. So I did.

WILLIHNGANZ: There's an interesting line between, between hand-crafted items and manufactured items. And the truth is, it isn't always as clean a line as a lot of people would think. There are a lot of variations, gradations in there. And, there's throwing pots, and then there's forms for pots, and then there's mass-produced pots. And how do you decide where you want to be on that line?

JIM WRIGHT: Well, with the pottery, to mass produce it, or the forms, or plaster blocks...they're big, they take a lot of storage, they have to be dried out,. And, we had considered, you know, for dinner plates, things like that, having a set, or making a set of molds but...and we'd buy a hundred pounds of plaster. And first thing you know, we'd chip it up, or something would happen. And, we'd make maybe a couple, but it just, if you have room to store the stuff. And well, if you make the mold yourself, its hand made. But, if someone else makes the mold, it's a manufactured thing. *[Wright and Willihnganz laugh.]* Little words, you know.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see. Well, that's an interesting differentiation.

JIM WRIGHT: And so, we just throw the stuff. I mean, if I'm making a set of plates...calipers, and I'll make one measure. And, I bring it out too far, I cut it off so it, its just,...it would be a whole lot easier to just be able to pour liquid clay into a mold. In

fact, I could hire somebody to do that while I'm doing something else and. But then, I'd have to store all those molds. And, each mold couldn't be used more than about once a day, unless it was a real hot dry summer day. Then you could maybe get out side. So, it just, we're living in the old farmhouse, which just was not set up as a pottery. And, the rooms are small. So, we, we just find it more convenient to do it the way we're doing it.

***[Speaking stops and there is some background noise for a few minutes]***