

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Lila Bellando

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Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: This is Greg Willihnganz interviewing Lila Bellando, at her home in Berea, Kentucky, on 8/13/08, for the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association. Tell me first a little bit about yourself and your growing up. You grew up in Kentucky, or you came here later on, or?

BELLANDO: No. I did not grow up in Kentucky. I was born in Alabama, moved to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, when I was four or five years old. Lived in Oak Ridge, graduated from high school there, and came to Berea College in, I guess, I won't say what year. **[Laughing]** In the fall of 1958...and I graduated from Berea College in 1962, and I majored in art. I was always, always making things and creating things. Art was, art was my primary love. So then, I went to Eastern and, Eastern Kentucky University, and got my masters degree in education. I didn't think, when I was going to Berea that I ever wanted to teach. But, it was the first thing that I did. I started teaching, and I found out that I really loved teaching art to children, and became totally convinced how important the arts are in the development of a human being. And, pretty much have devoted my professional life to that end. I've been in education, art education and art business, with Churchill Weavers, and that has constituted my full career.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, okay. Let's go back and talk then, about the art that you've done. And then, we can talk about Churchill Weavers and how you got involved with that, and what happened there. What types of arts have you done traditionally? I mean, have you focused mostly on sculpture or weaving or whatever?

BELLANDO: Well. I have sampled of a lot of different mediums. I have done bronze sculpture. I have done oil painting and water color, and I currently my love is water color. I still love the three dimensional forms, too. I think I sacrificed some of my own creative production time to working with art and education. Because, I just couldn't do as much as I wanted to do for myself because of teaching. Then, when the one thing I did not take in school, in college, anywhere, was weaving. It was the one thing that I did not take, and that I did not do, until we bought Churchill Weavers. Then, because I had a background in fabric, though I found out that I love weaving, and I love doing all the colors and the designs for fabric, and it is still a major love. My mother was a seamstress, and I grew up going in and out of fabric stores with her when I was a child, and I learned all about the different fabrics. I just knew that and it was certainly a big help to me when we bought Churchill Weavers, and I realized that I had a love for fabric that didn't even realize was there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Before that you did a lot of sculpture and paintings? You did the piece behind you?

BELLANDO: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Perhaps you could tell us just a little bit about that.

BELLANDO: Well it is a bronze relief. It was done with lost-wax. I did the design first of all in wax, and then that was cast in bronze. I used the foundry at Eastern to do that.

I thought about setting up my own foundry at one time, but my husband Richard said, well, he didn't think that was going to work, so. Currently I am doing more painting at this point.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, let's talk a little bit about, about what your feelings...or what motivates you to do particular pieces. I'm looking at this piece, and I'm thinking this is a woman who is sort of looking downward, and sort of coming out of the mist almost, with leaves and sort of things, and thinking what it is, what was in your mind when you made that?

BELLANDO: Well. I have always liked to do figurative work. I like the human figure, and have done a lot of drawing of human figure and painting of the human figure. When I was doing this particular piece, I wanted some of it to be representational, like the face and part of the body, but from there I wanted to use a lot of texture, and let it be a little mysterious and obscure. So that people could read whatever meaning they wanted to into it. I like working with texture a lot, and so I was able to achieve some of the texture in this piece by using lace, that I actually imbedded in the wax, and then I peeled it. And the wax is warm, and hot, hot. It is pliable. So, I put the lace into the wax, and then pulled it out, and it left the texture, and so the bronze was able to have that texture.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, you do, *[cough]* excuse me. But, you do the wax basically, and you do the carving or sculpting on the wax. Then you put a level layer of plastic or something over it? Then you cast into that? Is that how it works?

BELLANDO: Yeah. What, what you do, you do the entire piece of wax, it is wax. It is a wax piece when you do it. And then you, you cast into your material that you are going to use and it can be sand, it can be a number of things. Then you burn the wax out so you have hollow space inside your casting. Then when you put the molten bronze into it it takes the space. But, you have to have your screws, and that to let the gases escape. And you have to cut those off. You have to; you have to plan that in advance.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, you were able to actually look at the figure in wax as it would be here as you lay down the lace. When you put the lace on there, was the intention to make it look like clothing, or was it just to give it a texture that was unique?

BELLANDO: Texture, I love the texture that it gave.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, it does sort of seem to be coming out of this whole environment there. And at the same time she sort of has this far away almost Mona Lisa look, just very nice.

BELLANDO: Well thank you.

WILLIHNGANZ: You're still doing art work now? Your painting you said?

BELLANDO: I am doing water color at the moment. If I had the foundry, I would have probably done bronze sculpting. But I don't have that ability to do that. I am doing water colors. And actually, I got away from all of that for awhile, when I was so busy at Churchill Weavers. And my creative efforts were satisfied with designing fabric color at Churchill Weavers. But, now that Churchill Weavers is no longer open, I have time, and I'm starting to paint again. I'm enjoying, as I said, before a revival of water color. I'm, actually, I don't really want to say this, but teaching water color on some cruise ships. You can edit that out.

WILLIHNGANZ: *[Laughing]* When you...I don't think you have to be ashamed of that. It's a good thing to do.

BELLANDO: It's an opportunity to travel and its fun.

WILLIHNGANZ: And it may open doors for some people who haven't had the chance to do this.

BELLANDO: Well, you know, that's true.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I do.

BELLANDO: As a matter of fact, some of the people that I've had in my classes, have said that it...some of them have never done it before, some have never painted before. Some of them are coming back to start to paint again, and I had several notes from people who said "thanks, it has brought me back to painting, it's what I needed."

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

BELLANDO: So that was fun.

WILLIHNGANZ: When you think about doing a water color, how do you pick the subject that you want to portray?

BELLANDO: Well, you always know the things that move you, images that speak to you. One of the things that really intrigue me is dramatic lighting. A sky with a very dramatic...I like for it to have a mood, a mood. Not just a picture...., that it portrays a mood, and that really gets me excited. The same thing with doing people in water color. It is a strong mood, contrast of light and dark that interest me.

WILLIHNGANZ: But, when you see a sunset or whatever, it's a pretty transitory event. How do you capture, do you just capture that in your mind and then work from there?

BELLANDO: I can't...maybe some people can, and a lot of people do plein air, which is they go outside and they really paint. I've not done a lot of that. What I like to do is take photographs of things that...and the light, when you catch it in a photograph, may only be that way for ten seconds. You know, because the light is constantly changing. So I

take a lot of photographs. I'm building my library. I don't know if I will ever live long enough to paint all these things. But, I'm sure that I won't **[Laughing]**.

WILLIHNGANZ: I've done certain amount of video shooting. I haven't done, believe it or not, I haven't gotten to taken photographs per se, but I do a lot of video shooting. And, when I was working for a program that I did for U of L, I managed to go into my wife's parking lot, and look down the end of it, and I saw this, this building with a beautiful bell tower on the front of it, which is actually the engineering school. But it's gorgeous, and it was perfectly framed by trees. And I said, you know, I've got to capture this. So, I had my camera with me, and I took it out and I got that picture. And I've had comments about how nice that looks. And since I took that, they have cut the trees out. So sad, and its never coming back.

BELLANDO: Wow.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm wondering how much you think about the framing of whatever you are going to put, and how you organize the elements within the particular picture that you are doing.

BELLANDO: Oh, absolutely. I mean, I don't take the picture if the elements are not there. If there is not a focal point, not some drama in the focal point and things balance. Absolutely, I get the composition, when I take picture, and that's a very important part of it.

WILLIHNGANZ: When you take a subject and you decide, I'm actually going to paint this, is that motivated simply by the esthetic of it, or are there considerations about what it says, or the values it may express? Does it capture a particular agrarian ethic, or are there other considerations in your work?

BELLANDO: Well, for me, it's the emotion that is inherent in the picture itself, because I think that does speak to people. The emotion that is there and the emotion comes from the balance and the values, the focal point, the composition of it and the mood. I mean, you can look at one photograph and it is just a beautiful picture, its lovely. You can look at another photograph, and it's got this certain mood to it that causes you to stop and say "wow". That's what I look for.

WILLIHNGANZ: What does art actually do? What does it convey to people and what does it motivate them to do? Why do we do this?

BELLANDO: Well, we do it because it does speak to us first of all as an artist. The work has a message it may be just it may be an emotional message; it may be just a message of beauty. **[Phone ringing in background]** We do it because it satisfies something, a longing that is deep inside us, to say something. And, I think that is one of the reasons that it's so important. Well, there are a lot of reasons why it's so important for children and for people to have arts in their life. Even if you don't make art, if you don't create it, if you appreciate it and it speaks to you, you have to have the maker and

the viewer. You have to have both. For children, there are so many reasons why it's so important. It helps their learning ability, it helps their cognitive thinking, it helps them learn the sciences, it helps them learn reading, it helps them learn everything. It's a tool that helps their brain develop. If they are allowed to make art and be free with it, and not have somebody say, "Do this this way", to totally express themselves. It's very, very important, and I think more and more people have come to realize it. Many years ago, what twenty or thirty years ago, I think fewer people realized it, and I fought really hard to have more arts in the education in our schools, because I realized it. Other people did, and they worked with me. I guess I'm getting off track here a little bit. But, this is really a very important thing to me, and it's something that I've spent a lot of time with. I just feel that it is extremely important in the development of every human being, to have art in their life. You walk into somebody's home, and there is no art, you kind of feel that there is something missing. In their, well I don't, I don't want to be snobbish about it, but I really feel like it's just so important to the development of every human being to either be a maker, or appreciate, or to have it in their lives in some way. It can be...there are many forms of art.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, you have a great variety of art in your home. Here. That is original art. That's from the artist. How important is it for you to know the artist who made these pieces?

BELLANDO: Well. I love it when I know the artist. We don't have any art that is not original in our house. Everything we have is original. I love it when I can go buy a painting, and from somebody I know, and it's just like they are there with me. I say, "Hi", you know. I love it when I pull a mug out of the cabinet and I have coffee with Michael this morning, or some of my friends. My friends have made it all. It's extremely important and it's extremely important that we surround ourselves with things made by hand. Because there is so much in our world that's technological, that it is extremely important that we stay in touch with the human touch. We surround ourselves with things made by hand. That's how we stay human.

WILLIHNGANZ: I was looking this morning at Richard's booklet on Walter Hyleck, and all of his work. I noticed that some of his work, and they put it at the front of this catalog, was very political in nature. He shows a bomb chained to two balls, and an ICBM, and it's very clear there is a political statement to it. Do you think there is validity to using art to make a political statement, or is that really distorting the art?

BELLANDO: Absolutely. I mean absolutely. If you have a burning desire to...I mean to say something. Art has always been used as a, over the years and over the centuries', it's been used politically. So, that's very valid. It's very powerful, and it speaks to a lot of people when there is a strong statement in art. I think it's fine; I think it's important, I think it's valid.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you feel about the level of art education right now in our school system?

BELLANDO: Well. I have to tell you that I'm not really satisfied by that. I know that KERA has evolved and requires that art be there. And, I think that is very good. I mean that's one thing that was really a step forward. I know that there have been some movements to try to take it out of the KERA legislation. But it's important that it stay there. However, I think that it is not enough. I think that there needs to be more than there is. I know that is just my personal opinion about it. I'm glad its there, but its not enough.

WILLIHNGANZ: What do we need to do to promote that? What are the avenues we could go with this?

BELLANDO: Well. I think if parents, if parents realized how important it is, and the more they speak up, and the more they go to school, and have their voices heard to the, I guess they still have the councils that determine a lot of what the school is going to be run. I think if people would just speak up and talk to their legislators, and I don't know if it will ever happen, but I think it can.

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's talk a little bit about the history of art organizations in this state, and how they developed. You were involved with the Guild for many years? The Kentucky Guild of Artist and Craftsman?

BELLANDO: Uh-huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell us a little bit about that.

BELLANDO: Well. We first heard about the Kentucky Guild when we were students graduating from college. It had just been formed. I think Paul Hadley may have come to the art department and told us about it. We really didn't understand what it was about at that point, because we were graduating and going off in different ways. Though we came back, and it was my husband's Richard's first job back here in Kentucky, was as the first paid director of the Kentucky Guild of Artist and Craftsman. At that point I was with child, and so five days after the fair opened...no excuse me, about the same time the fair opened...or wait. I'm sorry. Two days before the fair opened I gave birth to our son. Then on Saturday, I went out to the fair, which was three or four days later, and it was a magnificent thing. But, there was a terrible storm. It hailed, I mean, I have never seen such a storm. Hail in May...but it did. And nobody had tents, so everyone was scurrying, trying to cover up and run for cover, and shelter, and what have you. I think...I remember that there were 1,500 customers who came to the show. We thought that was just magnificent. Of course today, 1,500 would not be considered a good number. But it was a brand new thing. And a lot of people had not done shows before. Some people had, but a lot had not. And Richard went up into the mountains, and he literally drug people out to come set up as artists, as craftspeople. To come and do a show...and he introduced to the world a lot of people who had not been out of the hollars of Eastern Kentucky before. It was a very, very exciting thing. Now, the connection that later had some bearing on our life, was that Churchill Weavers was at the first show. They came out and they were out there. Mrs. Churchill was very

impressed with the fact that Richard brought this little show out...in their first year, had gotten some major buyers from New York to fly down here. He got buyers from George Jensen's, and some other big players, who came to that show because Richard contacted them and said they must come, and they did. As a result of that, Churchill got several orders from New York, which opened up a New York market that had not...she had had some marketing in New York before, but not with these particular stores. She was very impressed with that, and with his ability to market the first fair. So, she kind of watched Richard, and I became a little bit involved with her. She knew that I was in art, I taught art. I was in art and design, and she had me model some things at the shows around town. As a result of that, she thought about us when she wanted to sell the company. She came to us. So, I don't know if you want to get into that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, sure. Let's talk about that.

BELLANDO: But as far as the Guild goes, we were very excited about the formation of the Guild. And we thought that, you know, it was a wonderful thing. The possibilities for education for workshops, the marketing, and I'm sure that Richard has already told you about the initiatives that he started with that, but.

WILLIHNGANZ: He has, but I would appreciate hearing some of the things from you, just in terms of what you felt were significant in the development of the organization, so we can get some sort of picture of what the state development was going on at that time.

BELLANDO: The state development?

WILLIHNGANZ: What was the state of art and craft in Kentucky when Richard took over?

BELLANDO: Well, it was not organized at all. There was no organization. There was not a central agency...other than the fact that the Guild had been established. You know, back when Paul Hadley was here, as far as I know there was not any other statewide organization existing. So, that it was important. The Guild was important for that point of view. Then, I believe when Phyllis George was first lady, she was very instrumental in really pulling together what became the Kentucky Crafts. I can't even think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I don't know that I can help you here. Sorry.

BELLANDO: Wait a minute. Why I can't think of that? I know, she really brought a lot of attention to Kentucky Crafts nationally, and because of that they started going to the New York gift show. It, and she got them in stores, Bloomingdales and other stores. And, it was, it brought a lot of focus to crafts. And then it became an economic development issue, and people found that this was a wonderful way to take advantage of what was a natural inherent ability in a lot of people who were, who lived in Kentucky. To...for them to develop their craft, that might have been passed down for

centuries...not centuries, but for years, in their family, and actually make a business out of it. And, have money come in, an economic development. And that big push really did a lot for Kentucky craft marketing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, was this the Kentucky Arts Craft Council? Or, am I getting the name somehow, names wrong?

BELLANDO: No, no.

WILLIHNGANZ: And did that take place, the Phyllis George initiative if you will, did that take place before Richard was the Director?

BELLANDO: No, no, no after.

WILLIHNGANZ: After? Okay. Well, it sounds a lot like what Richard was doing was bringing the crafts of the people from the rural communities in to make them more accessible to the more urban areas.

BELLANDO: Oh, he did, that's true.

WILLIHNGANZ: And then, you brought in the marketing to New York and other places. And how much of that actually affected the rural communities? Do you have any way of knowing what that did?

BELLANDO: I really don't know. But, I think it's had a...over the years has a big impact, but I don't know, and I don't have any statistics about that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes. That is something I should probably research as we go further with this project. At any rate, Richard was, and what was his title, the Chairman of Kentucky Guild? Or, the director?

BELLANDO: No. He was the Executive Director.

WILLIHNGANZ: Executive Director?

BELLANDO: Of the Kentucky Guild.

WILLIHNGANZ: How long was he the director, do you remember that?

BELLANDO: I think four years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. And then you were active, of course, in the Guild during that time, I would assume? And then, did the two of you remain active in the Guild in the years following his directorship?

BELANDO: I was active in the Guild only, only to the extent that I supported him, and was, you know, was there at all the events. I was not actually a Guild member, and I was not a Guild member until we bought Churchill Weavers. That was in 1973. That's when I became a member of the Guild.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see. Okay then, lets talk a little bit about Churchill Weavers, about what state were they in when you bought them?

BELANDO: Well. I got a call one day from Mrs. Churchill, and she asked me to come and talk to her. I went into her office, and she offered me the job as the designer at Churchill Weavers. I was very flattered. I told her I didn't know anything about weaving, and she said, "Well, you can learn. I'll teach you". I said, "Well, yes. I can learn". But, I said, " I have to think about it". I was teaching, teaching art at the Berea Community School, and I loved what I was doing. So, I decided not to take the job. And, I went in to tell her I was not going to take the job. She said, "Well, if you won't come work for me," she said, "Do you and Dick want to buy the business?" And it was a very big shock to me. And she called Richard, Dick, at that point; she would eventually call him Richard. I mean I just about fell over, because I did not, had not ever entertained such a notion. So we took a long time trying to decide. We talked with her. She gave us an option on it, and it took us about six weeks to make a decision to do it, because it was a very frightening thing. It had, I think, the profit it had made that year we bought it, or the previous year, was a thousand dollars. And, we thought, you know, we just didn't know if we could make it work. We didn't think of ourselves as business people. We didn't know really, anything about it, except she had confidence in us, Mrs. Churchill. We decided to do it. Richard wanted to. I was...I really didn't, because I was worried about it, but we did it. So, I quit my teaching job and I worked there for a year or two without any pay, and learned. I sat down with Mr. Win Cody, who was an elderly gentleman who had been in the textile business for over fifty years. He sat down with me everyday. He taught me how to design on graph paper, no computers or anything how it all worked. And so then, we set about changing things slightly. Mrs. Churchill stayed on as consultant for three years. She really did not want to let us do it our way. It was hard for her to let go. That caused trouble. It was hard for us, because well, it just was. She was a tough, tough little lady. She wanted her way, and I can understand that now. When it came time to think about, because there were times when we thought about when we needed to let go. I didn't know if I could let go, and so I understood her position. But, she did tell me on three occasions before she died, that she had made the right decision when she chose us to take the business. So, that is really very comforting to me, because we've now...we bought the Churchill House. So, I would hate to think she was unhappy with me. Because, suppose we hear rattling around in the attic, and you know, I know that it is friendly. **[Laughing]** So, one of the things that we tried to do, was to respond to the market a lot more quickly than...Mr. Churchill was deceased at the time we bought it from her. So, she didn't seem to respond to the market very quickly. It's like she had to work a really long time on the design, and try it out in front of a lot of people. But it might take a really long time to get something designed, finished, and out the door. We were going to do it a lot faster and we did. We had a much faster turn around. A store called and asked for a particular color, by

golly they were going to get it pretty quick. And we were able to do that. We did do that, we responded to the market quickly. We also probably did a lot more designs within a year's time. And we did a lot of current, current...we really tried to stay current in what was going on in the market. We had a really rich resource, because the archives had been kept at Churchill Weavers. One sample of every piece that was every done there since 1924 was somewhere in boxes. So, we had this wonderful library to go to, but it was not very well, it had not been organized. They were very good at organizing and keeping records, but over the years boxes had gotten shifted and, you know, so we didn't have a real good way to go take something out, and record that we had taken it out, and make sure it went back to the same box. So things got a little bit jumbled up, but we did have that wonderful resource available to us that we were able to, to get deposited into the Kentucky Historical Society when Churchill did close.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, was Richard the Director of the Guild at the time?

BELLANDO: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: How, well, long after did that take place?

BELLANDO: Richard was the Director of the Guild until probably 1971. I mean it was like four years, I think '67, somewhere in there. I don't know exactly. He went from being Director of the Guild to being the Alumni Director of Berea College. He was the Director, the Alumni Director when we bought Churchill Weavers. And so, when we bought Churchill Weavers, he resigned from that position to, for us both to run Churchill Weavers. He was the President of Churchill Weavers. I was deeply involved in learning the designs, and how the looms worked, and the operational side, of the creative operational side of the business, and he was the President. In 1980, I think it was 1982, he left Churchill Weavers, and became the director of Student Craft Industries at Berea College. And so, he wasn't working with me at Churchill Weavers. So, I became President. Three years later he came back to Churchill Weavers, and I refused to give up my office. *[laughing]* So, I stayed President. See what happens when you leave?

WILLIHNGANZ: That's a real cautionary tale. *{Laughing}*

BELLANDO: But actually I...the truth of the matter is, I would have been happy for him to take back over, but he really, I guess he was happy with the job I was doing, and did not choose to do that. But, he did come back, and he stayed at Churchill Weavers until 2006.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

BELLANDO: And we worked together. We did a lot of shows, we traveled, we opened new markets, we became cutting edge with our fabric, for two years, as far as designs.

WILLIHNGANZ: How many employees did you have when you started at Churchill Weavers?

BELLANDO: We started, you know, I actually don't remember how many employees we had when we started. I don't remember that. But at one point we got up to ninety, ninety-two or three employees. We became a lot more efficient, and we were able to produce more with fewer employees. And attrition occurred because some of the employees had been there for fifty years. And, as they retired, we were always open to hire weavers. I mean, because weaving is a highly skilled, highly, highly skilled job and learning to weave our looms took at least a year, or maybe two years, depending on the person. So, we were always looking to hire weavers, because we never knew when we were going to need somebody else. We, when Churchill Weavers closed, we had had to downsize, because sales were dropping, and because of the Chinese, Asian imports. They were copying our designs, and the market was flooded. There is such a thing as a category killer. When you have, you put something out that competes with an original product, you put it out and you put it everywhere at \$9.99, quote unquote, here comes a category killer. It's not as desirable a product anymore. So that happened with our throws. But, and so, we closed in 19 excuse me, in 2007. But you know, there's a lot of water over the dam between, in those in between years.

WILLIHNGANZ: There's a lot of years in there, that's for sure.

BELLANDO: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell us a little bit about the examples here that you have.

BELLANDO: Yeah. I would just love to show you this. This is one of our latest designs that we did.

WILLIHNGANZ: You need to hold...well let me, let me...no. You just stay there. I'm going to bring the camera down to show this. Okay, go ahead.

BELLANDO: And this is an absolutely, well I think, it is a beautiful design, and it is a double weave, which means it's about two layers, and one side is the opposite of the other side. A beautiful design in chenille that was...We brought this out just shortly before Churchill Weavers closed. And I will tell you, that I was comfortable designing up to eight harnesses, but when we got any more, when we got multi-harness, we got a lot more than eight, I needed help. So, I worked with a designer in New York, who helped me pick the colors. She helped me to do this design. It is a very, very special design. This is one that I did, and again it is chenille. It is two weights of chenille, and is very festive and fun design. We did couch throws, baby blankets, ladies scarves and accessories. We used to do men's neck-ties, and the men loved our neck-ties, but we started having problems in that we would sew the ties up, hang them on the rack, they looked beautiful. Next morning we would come in and they would be twisted, twisted! And we tried every way in the world to figure out what was going on, and we finally figured that it was the twist in the yarn somehow, not being balanced, but it was such an

ordeal. And we just could not predict what was going to happen. So we just stopped making them. But, we still have, every once in a while, someone will bring one out of their closet and they will give Richard a neck-tie we. We're getting this collection, wonderful collection of old Churchill Weaver neck-ties.

WILLIHNGANZ: Are they twisted or have they straightened out over the years?

BELLANDO: No. These are the ones that didn't; we didn't sell the ones that twisted. Nobody ever got those. They just went into some kind of give away pile, but the ones that were good are the ones we are getting back.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well that's good. That is reassuring.

BELLANDO: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: So as, as you were doing the weaving, were you still involved with the crafts organizations?

BELLANDO: Oh, absolutely. We were...we showed at the Guild. We, you know, would set up with the Guild. We also were very, very active, and have been, in the Southern Highland Guild, Southern Highland Craft Guild in Asheville. It covers the Appalachian Regional Commission area. We've always been very active in that, and I volunteered a lot of our time.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, you started with that back in the '70's or?

BELLANDO: Actually we did. Right we did.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you've served on there their board as well is that correct?

BELLANDO: Yes. That is correct. I served on the board. I served two terms on the board, and was on the finance committee, and actually am on the Board again now, and am President of the Board.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh wow. I hear they are a pretty active organization.

BELLANDO: They are very, very active.

WILLIHNGANZ: How large is their annual budget?

BELLANDO: The annual budget is, I don't know, if you want to know if you're talking about their income, or?

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, yeah. I'm talking about what their operating...they are putting out...they are cycling through.

BELLANDO: Probably about three million.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, that is substantial amount of resources to be dealing with. And what are they doing with that?

BELLANDO: Wow. They have...they do two craft fairs, which is a marketing opportunity for the crafts people who belong. And the marketing opportunity is very important, because that was one of the reasons the Guild was established in the first place. Is to give the crafts people an opportunity to be able to sell their work, and provide for their families. That is one of the reasons it started, so they have two fairs, and they are both in Asheville. They used to be, one in Asheville and one in Gatlinburg, and they were highly successful. But that got changed, and they are both in Asheville now. They also have a, what they call the Folk Art Center, which is on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Asheville. And, in the Folk Art Center, which is the center of the activities, they have their offices there. They have a shop called Allanstand, where they sell the work of their members. They also have many, many changing exhibitions. They have many educational opportunities; they have demonstrations, all the time, of craft work. They have classes. They have Clay day, and Wood day, which all of the communities are invited to come in and to see demonstrations of these things happening, and they can buy the work. It's, it's a wonderful organization. They also operate several other craft stores. There is one in Gatlinburg, Cumberland Gap, Moses Cone, where they sell the work of the crafts people. They are looking for another marketing opportunity. They would like to find another place to open up another store. Its, it's the second oldest craft guild in the country. It is a wonderful organization. I love it. I love the people. There's a real bonding that happens with the people in the Guild. And I can't really explain it. They all do...all have their little squabbles, and you know, it's like...sometimes I thought of it as what a fire goes through the forest. In some ways its good for the forest, you know. There is always a little fire somewhere, but it brings people together, even when they come together to settle an issue. It...they're together, and their bonded, you know. Its, it's...I just love the, great...it's a great organization.

WILLIHNGANZ: Are they doing a lot of educational programs?

BELLANDO: They do. They do.

WILLIHNGANZ: And do those...are those focused mostly in Tennessee, or are they?

BELLANDO: Oh no. They are Appalachian regions. It's pretty well defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission. So, not all of Kentucky is in it, is in the region.

WILLIHNGANZ: I didn't know that. That's interesting.

BELLANDO: It cuts through some states, Alabama; part of Alabama is in it, part of Georgia. Even part of North Carolina.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

BELLANDO: Have to get a map to look at it to see the region that is included.

WILLIHNGANZ: What are your hopes for that organization, or where do you want to take it?

BELLANDO: Well, one of the things that some of our goals are working on...we would like to get legislation passed that would provide us the building that we are currently in, which we built and paid for, in perpetuity. But it will have to be a legislative thing. We also want to expand it. We are on hold for raising funds to expand the building, to give us a lot more exhibition space, storage for our archives. Right now we just don't have enough space for that to adequately do that. That's a big thing, that's a very big thing. Then we are hoping to have more marketing opportunities, and there are always things we are dealing with. I mean standards. It's constantly changing. Jurying in, and we have a very active committees. People volunteer their time, they just love this organization.

WILLIHNGANZ: How many active members do you have right now?

BELLANDO: Active? There are 900 members. How many of those are active I can't say for sure. A lot of them are not. I can't say for sure.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did the Guild have any influence on the establishment of the Artisan Center here in Berea?

BELLANDO: You're talking about Southern Highland Guild or the?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, either.

BELLANDO: I don't think the Southern Highland Guild had anything to do with it. I don't know about the Kentucky Guild. But, I don't think so. Well, I think there had to be a lot of state money. And I'm sure Richard could speak to this a lot better than I can, but I don't...who was governor?

WILLIHNGANZ: Patton?

BELLANDO: Yeah, Patton. He really wanted this. He was very instrumental in this happening. He pledged to support it. I think the center in West Virginia was a big inspiration...everybody went up there to see that. Kentucky wanted something equal to the one in West Virginia. I don't know how the Guild did or did not work with it. I just don't know. It would have nothing to do with the Southern Highland Guild. So, I guess I just can't talk about it very much because I don't know very much.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well. I just feel like the strength of the craft community could be improved if you had a better liaison, and better cooperative movement within the organization. Would you believe...would you agree with that?

BELLANDO: Oh, absolutely. I do know that when they were proposing to build the Artisan Center here in Berea, a lot of the local people were not for it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Really?

BELLANDO: Because they were afraid it would be competition, and that people wouldn't come into town to visit their studios. I think to some extent people feel that has really happened. That is has hurt some people's sales. But, I stood up at that first meeting, and I said I would rather for it to be here than somewhere else. It's going to happen, and so, I would rather it be here for that than somewhere else.

WILLIHNGANZ: And hopefully, I would think, you know, if the state is open to allowing you to, basically...if I go in there and I see rows of procures for various events and activities, I don't know how much local artists are represented among those, but it seems to me that the two should actually be building each other up. You know, you should come to, for an hour or two, at the Artisan Center, and then walk through downtown Berea, because it's terrific.

BELLANDO: I think they worked very hard at trying to get to put an information center at the Artisan Center that would direct people into town. They are really...they're trying to do that, and I think it is a lot better than it was. But it, the Artisan Center itself, when I go in there now, I'm amazed and impressed on how much more complete the body of work there is, than when they first opened in 2000. So they are growing. Victoria is doing a wonderful job, I think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, it looks to me like a very smart center. They have a nice cafeteria. They got a nice little area outdoors, where you can relax, and you can actually spend time there comfortably. I was talking to a lady who told me that they don't have any picnic tables, which frankly is a mistake. But that's their choice. But yeah, the more we can build this up, it seems to me, the better it's going to be for everyone involved.

BELLANDO: And, I do want to say that Cheryl Stone, (of course...she wasn't Cheryl Stone at the time), from...Eastern Kentucky University was very instrumental in working with the state, and the program that she was with, there at Eastern...and Berea College worked with it, too. Berea College was all for...it took a group of people working together to make it happen. But, I do not think that the Guild was involved. I could be wrong.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you think, in general, the state of crafts in this area is going?

BELLANDO: In this area?

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, yeah, in Kentucky.

BELLANDO: Well. I think we've come along way. I think the craft people have learned a lot, and have developed their craft, and they are much more skilled. I think more institutions are including craft classes and programming, and all that's very important. I think the economy is hurting everybody right now, including the sale of crafts. I hope that doesn't make people leave what they are doing, and you know, go get a job somewhere. But, you know, things need to turn around. I think basically, people have, as I said, they have learned a lot and have grown in their craft, and the quality of the work that they do is so, so much better than it was years ago. I think that Kentucky has been put on the map. Kentucky craft marketing has been incredible. In the work that they do, the workshops that they sponsored over the years in many, many, many...to teach people the craft of the business of doing craft. How to get their photographs taken, how to price. Kentucky craft marketing is a model. Well, I don't know about exactly today, because I don't know the funding going into that program. But, I know that is has been a model for the rest of the United States. States have come to us and asked, you know, how did you do this? What did you do? How did you get the state to support you, is what they all say. It's, it's been amazing ***[Phone ringing in the background.]*** what Kentucky craft marketing has done.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me what you can in about the history of Kentucky Craft Marketing Program.

BELLANDO: That's where I'm a little foggy. I know that it was called the Arts Commission, and I believe it was during Phyllis' time, that what is now the Kentucky Craft Marketing actually started...I remember Lois Matheus was involved. I just can't remember all the names. The program, as it was evolved, into Kentucky Craft Marketing. But from the beginning, everything that happened culminated into Kentucky Craft Marketing. I'll tell you, Fran Redmon was amazing in her leadership. Let's see. Someone else, just can not remember how it all happened. Too many years have gone by. But, I'm so proud of Kentucky Craft Marketing, because it...nobody. I don't think any other state has had what we have had...support...and as a result of that, things are so...Kentucky is on the map for crafts.

WILLIHNGANZ: You've got about a minute left on the tape. Is there anything else you would like to add?

BELLANDO: Oh my goodness gracious. Well, there is probably a lot, but I don't know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Thank you so much for everything you've shared Lila.

[End of recording.]