

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Lois Mateus

September 30, 2008

Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: This is Greg Willihnganz interviewing Lois Mateus at the Kentucky Museum Art and Craft. It is September 30, 2008. Thank you Lois for doing this, we certainly appreciate it. And I would like to start. Perhaps we could talk just a little bit about what your background and education was, and your interest. What brought you to be involved in the arts?

MATEUS: Okay. Well, I grew up on a farm in Central Kentucky. A tobacco farm. A dairy farm. And you know was an avid reader. The youngest child of much older parents who spent a lot of time with me. My mother loved fabrics and textiles, and learned to sew and design, and make my own clothes at an early age, so interested in it from that angle. Went to University of Kentucky, and one of my early positions was as a writer with the Department of Public Information. And, in the Department of Public Information, that was the very end of the Louis Nunn Administration. It was, say, in 1970 or so...and there was like a craft movement then, to particularly have Kentucky Arts and Crafts featured in the Kentucky State Parks system. And, I believe the lady's name was Mary O'Hara. It may be O'Hara, or it could be O'Hare. I don't know, but Mary O'Hara. She was appointed, and she had an office at the end of Capitol Avenue. The Capitol was at one end, it dead ends on Main Street at the other end. In perpendicular, and right there, was little building that was full of crafts in the window? And Mary was going around the state recruiting crafts people for the Parks System to be displayed. And I wrote some stories about her as a writer with Department of Public Information. And I do remember there was a woman named Gorum. And her husband was Mayor of Hazard. And she was, besides Mary, the other kind of matriarch of the crafts movement at that time. And we were already going to Berea, in May I believe, just once a year. And very much knew about the Guild, and certainly Churchill Weavers. I mean, I know I did several articles about Churchill Weavers. And that, I believe, was prior to Richard and Lila's involvement. But they were, I think, Richard may have been teaching at Berea. And I mean, Berea was just the Mecca, at that time, of crafts. And certainly, from tourism promotion in Kentucky, we would point people to go there, and to crafts at the state parks. So, that was my earliest involvement. But, you know, just came to love it. And then I got involved in politics. In '72 or so, I became Public Relations Director for the Democratic Party in Kentucky. And, you know, the structure of the political organization...Kentucky's 120 counties, and more counties than we should have, but we have a lot of counties. But, you had to learn the local power structure in every county. And I already knew my counties. If, if you are a newcomer to the state...but we usually don't say Owensboro or Madisonville, we say Daviess County and Hopkins County, such as Jefferson County. We are much more focused on the county names sometimes than, at least native Kentuckians are, than the town names, or the county seat names. But anyway, I got to know the state really, really well. And then, also in '72, John Y. Brown did the first Democratic National Telethon to raise money for the National Democratic Party. And I worked in that as a volunteer. Got to know John, he still owned Kentucky Fried Chicken at that point, and so I got to be free lance writer on the side. Wrote speeches for him, and again, staying very close to the state through the political involvement, you know, working with County Chairmen, and trips maybe, with the Governor to...and different Governor's. But, and then in '76, I headed up the Bi-Centennial. And we had a chance to recognize main

street programs within the state. And, and again, crafts was always, you know...when I go in there I always look at the local crafts people...or if we heard, I always go to Berea Craft Fair. I mean, it was always something you had to do; it was in May, I believe. And half the time it would rain and it would be dreary, but you would be hot and muggy, but you just went there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now was this the Guild?

MATEUS: I think the Guild sponsored it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sponsored it?

MATEUS: It was, it was at the old Wilderness Road site. Kind of outside Berea. But I felt it was Guild, and I'm trying to remember if, if there was somebody named Jerry.

WILLIHNGANZ: Workman.

MATEUS: Jerry Workman was involved, and Garry Barker may have been involved that far back. I mean Garry surfaced later, and Jerry had a shop later. I don't know if Jerry still has a shop in Berea or not.

WILLIHNGANZ: I don't know, honestly.

MATEUS: But then music was interwoven with it. I mean, there was the dulcimer music and the Bluegrass music. And it was just, you know it was, it became very engrained in me that it was crafts...were a part of Kentucky Heritage. And we were sitting in this room of quilts, and you know, my mother quilted. And we had, I mean, I have quilts that go back to my great grandmother. And we also had a giant loom in one of our tobacco barns that had belonged to my great grandmother. And they did wool, they wove wool on it, and it was like wool blankets they made. It later burned in a fire. But, so I think the, the love of definitely visual art, and the tactual...and principally textiles, for me set the hook. And just coming to know the state more and more, and love it more and more. Meeting people in every county.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, you also had the chance to study textiles in Ireland and Denmark.

MATEUS: I did, I did. I was on an exchange program, and Sybil Conley was the designer...and I'm sure she is dead. But, she did a lot with wool and it, not unlike Churchill Weavers. I mean the looms, and very similar to the Churchill Weaver's style. And of course, Irish linen was important. But my whole fixation was natural fiber. You know cotton, silk, linen, wool. And textiles.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, how did you become the first Commissioner of Department of the Arts?

MATHEUS: Well, so John Y. Brown, as I said. I had worked for him as kind of a volunteer, and then as a free lancer for speech writing. And in 1979, I was toying with the idea of going to architectural school. I wanted to be an architect. The idea was always back there, you know. I would like to be an architect, and John said, "Oh, come work on the campaign". Well, he had married Phyllis George, and on their honeymoon he had decided that he was going to come back and run for Governor of Kentucky. And, I think he had actually...we teased him. I think he had to come back and buy property in Kentucky. He was a native Kentuckian, but had been living elsewhere. **[Laughter]** And, you know, I knew John, and he married Miss America. And I was that generation that was...didn't know much about what I thought about Miss America. And here she comes. And she is so down to earth, real. And she loved. I mean, I started out in definitely in his camp, and having to put up with her. Then it was just the reverse. I became such a fan of hers and having to put up with him. I would say that to both of them. But Phyllis, as she would go out to campaign...well, first of all, we called her Fly Paper, because everywhere she went...I mean all we had to say...I mean Terry McBrayer was supposed to win that campaign. He had been running for a year. And John got in late, just at the last minute, right before the filling deadline. And they just stole the show, because they would go into a town and it would be, "Miss America is here". And she was just real, and she, and she...first thing she would do was make a beeline to the craft shop, or wherever she could buy things that were made local. And some of the greatest campaign pictures we had. We had...turn of the century women in Kentucky would wear bonnets that were frequently floral, sometimes made of feed sacks, chicken feed sacks. But, some bonnets they could tie under their chin, kind of similar to a Shaker bonnet, but in prints. And we got a picture of Phyllis. She loved them. She would buy them and send them to friends in Hollywood. And a picture of Miss America with one of those bonnets on, probably helped him win the election, because you know, it was just...Because she was a giver. I mean, she still is very generous and always sending gifts to her friends. She would buy a Curtis Alvey basket. Curtis I think lived in Hardin County, and I know she sent one to Johnny Carson. And she didn't even wrap it. She just put a...tied one of the wire tied labels on it, and sent it to his address in Hollywood. And sent it off, and they said the postman can't carry the basket. It wasn't even in a box, you know, but, and then she, they would have her friends here, and of course she was still doing CBS Sports at the time. So, lots of contacts in New York in the media world. And, I mean it wasn't, but here was a very handsome man marrying Miss America, running for Governor. They got a lot of national media. Attention, covers of People Magazine and things like that, and crafts would always be woven into the story. And so, the first I was...suppose it would be the 1980 Democratic Convention, Marvin Traub of Bloomingdales hosted, it was in New York. And Marvin hosted a luncheon for all of the Governor's wives who were attending the Democratic Convention. And Bloomingdales had launched a huge China exhibition, and they were selling all things from China, huh, and so Phyllis couldn't stand it. She stood up and said, "Marvin, you know I just don't know why you don't promote things made in America". And she made this little passionate speech in front of everybody. She was always doing impromptu stuff like that, and he says, well Phyllis, well that is cool, well send me some stuff. Well she gets on the phone, and I'm back in Kentucky. And, tells me to gather up Bybee Pottery bowls, a rag rug from Minnie Adkins, and a

straw basket from Curtis Alvey, and a Churchill Weaver's stowl, and get that to Bloomingdales. And they gave me the Vice President of Bloomingdales. And I was Arts Commissioner at that. I've got off track a little bit, but John had appointed me Public Information Commissioner, because that is what I wanted, because, back in the Nunn administration, I had been a writer on my first job for state public information. Well, John says, "I'll appoint you Commissioner of Public Information. I can tell you it is a propaganda agency. It's a waste of money. I don't believe in it. I'm going to abolish it. But you can have it if you want". So we did that for about less than a year, and that's when he abolished Public Information and formed the Department of Tourism, in the Arts, and I became the first Commissioner. So, I was probably the Commissioner of Arts by the time I went to Bloomingdales. And I just, you know, had the appointment with the Chairman of Bloomingdales...had arranged, but I got in...and I remember, when I, I just my...Kentucky, I took a map to make sure they knew where Kentucky was **[Laughing]**. And, and Zak Clove, who had been a photographer of President Kennedy, had done a beautiful book, because he was a friend of the Browns, on Kentucky. Such as this beautiful picture table top book, and I remember saying, and I remember saying...I saying I just wanted, as I was leaving, thank you so much for the appointment. I just really wanted to get my foot in the door. We want to send your buyers to Kentucky. And Carl Levine was the man I met with, and Mr. Levine said, "Well, I think you are in up to your knees, and we will send somebody within two months". We had a team of buyers from Bloomingdales coming in. John had this big Sikorsky helicopter, and they were very impressed to be met at Standiford Field, in a helicopter, and whisked off. And we get to David, Kentucky, where we were met by a beat-up pick-up truck, with tin cans. And, I can remember some of these women from Bloomingdales got off the Sikorsky helicopter, and had to climb up in the back of a pick-up truck, but they loved it. And we went to a place like David, where the people were just down to earth and real. And I can remember even going to places with Phyllis. And, you know, in Kentucky, rural Kentucky, you're bed might be in the living room. And she would go, and they knew she was coming, and they would have made cakes or pies. And she would just plop down on the bed, and just sit and talk to these people. And it was her very grounded and Southern traditional...she was just a Texan. People loved her and she opened doors. And we went from the Bloomingdales exhibit of OhKentucky, big half page in the New York Times, at Oh Kentucky. Big opening. Lots of media. We did Neiman Marcus in Beverly Hills. We did the big store in Chicago that no longer is, Marshall Fields of Chicago. As I arranged it, but just before I went inform, I did not attend it...Takashimaya in Japan. Did a feature on Kentucky Crafts, and it was...we had covers and, you know, Town and Country. We had Better Homes and Gardens, a magazine called Country Living. A native Kentuckian, John Mack Carter, was then President of Hearst Cooperation, so we got lots of exposure with the Hearst Magazine...which I named most of those. And with the Kentuckians in New York, which is a pretty strong organization in New York City, and I mean we went all the way from...again I mentioned music before. We were able to take the McClain Family Band from Berea to Carnegie Hall. And it was just a promotion of all things Kentucky. But, and the beautiful thing about it is, that John, the Governor and his head of Economic Development, W.T. Young, embraced arts as part, and crafts as part of economic development. We were the Economic Development Cabinet. And they really saw that

we could open doors, I mean with Arm & Hammer exhibit to both Lexington and Louisville. We, through Economic Development...the Grace Cooperation...I mean there were just...it was probably setting the ground for Toyota in those days, because kind attention to something that was unique to Kentucky.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, that's great. Do you think it was significant that this was created, at this particular time?

MATEUS: We live in a celebrity culture. We live, you know...fifteen minutes of fame, or whatever. But I think that what was significant is the foundation, foundation had been laid, and we had these incredible crafts people. I mean, we didn't have a database per se, on the crafts people. But they were coming out of the wood work. And it was...what they created was beautiful, it was solid...it was real. And, you have somebody with a national and international persona that can promote it. And, we hadn't had that kind of promotional opportunity. It was Kentucky's own little version of Camelot at that time. And it was...it worked. And then, we got people like Marian Alliance behind it. Donna and John Hall...that was actual...at the time. And certainly, I mean Christy Brown ended up serving on the Arts Council. You had, I mean, Ron Foreman was contributing. Phillip Morris, at that time, was very strong in Louisville, Kentucky. But Morris was very supportive, and so it, it got a big push that it needed at that time. And you know, I never felt...my style is collaboration. I've, I've never felt just...I'm pretty much think there is room for all kinds of organizations to work together, in that, if we have a common goal we don't have to all be alike. But a rising tide can lift all boats. And so it is fine with me to have a Visual Arts Association, the Water Tower to have its organization. Certainly, I never felt any friction at all with Berea. The Guild. The Guild at that time had a shop on Chevy, in Chevy Chase in Lexington. We would all go there. And later years the, what the...the big market they have developed in Berea. I can't remember they call it, but it's out near the Interstate. The craft center...it just didn't seem there was any competition between the various groups that were working in crafts, because we were all working together. Hey, do you know so in so? Sure. Tell them to send something. And when there was an opportunity to gifting. We were at the National Governor's Association, or the President, or whoever she was sending Kentucky Crafts.

WILLIHNGANZ: What role did the Department of Arts play in the creation of the State Craft Program that has continued for twenty-five years?

MATHEUS: Well, we had the first market. First of all, before the market, we were doing individual visits. The Bloomingdale's buyers probably came in the years I was there, about four or five times, they actually came to Kentucky. Neiman Marcus. Bloomingdales would send a team of five people, and Neiman Marcus was probably just more one person. But, we saw this interest. And initially, we went to some trade shows. Like the Gift Show in Jacobs, the Javits Center, or maybe the Gift Show in Atlanta, maybe Kentucky just had a small booth. But, we saw the interest was there. And Fran was working in those days, when I was in Frankfort. Fran was a graphic artist in the Department of the Arts, because the Arts included...it was the Arts Council. It

was the Foundation, the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation we spun off, and it was almost always headquartered here, because of the Shands' commitment. I think they gave office space initially. But whenever we had...the first market...everybody just kind of worked on it. Fran was always interested in it, and she just kind of evolved into that position. And then, when I left in '82, a woman named Kaye Lowe became...Kaye was one of my deputies, had two deputies. And so Steve, I don't think stayed very long after I did. But Kaye became Commissioner of the Arts. She is probably somebody you should talk to, too. I think she is in Louisville. And Kaye probably promoted Fran even more. There was a woman named Karen Horseman, who was a friend of Fran's. And Karen was from Indiana. And she went back to Indiana and got a law degree. But Karen would have been an early coordinator with me. But you know, but the Johnny Carson show did something for Kentucky Crafts. Ed McMahon was a huge fan of Kentucky Crafts, and I mean, I think it was the basket that sent through the mail, you know. I don't know if Curtis Alvey is still around, but he was, he was...it was a family that done beautiful baskets. Not as fine as the honeysuckle baskets that you see in, in Eastern Kentucky. But the Bloomingdale's buyers, "Could you dye these? And at first, I thought it was like a sacrilegious that you could dye these baskets. And they taught him to dip strips, to dip them in Rit dye before he wove it. And so, it had a pattern to it. And that was just Bloomingdale's trendy angle, angle or aspect to it. But the more I...Fran just took the market and ran with it in a very good way. Fran and Nancy Atcher and some other people there in the Department. And then I think it may have...I'm not for sure how the department structure exists today, or what cabinet it is even under. Because once I got Brown Forman, my focus became the foundation. And then, we invented the Bourbon Ball. And again, I'm at Brown Forman and this energy...I was spinning it. Bourbon was also a craft. Barrels are a craft. I mean, if you haven't had a tour of the cooperage, you should have a tour of the cooperage, because that's one of the most beautiful crafts. And, and we got a really strong foundation from, from day one.

WILLIHNGANZ: So how did the work of the program compliment the work that was already being done by the Guild and the Kentucky Arts Council?

MATEUS: I just think we kind of went along and everybody did their thing. And if there were work, if the Foundation had a workshop, certainly people from the Guild would be involved. They could...some of them could teach the work shops. And the Foundation would do tours for the board members or the other interested people, to go out, and go to the show in Berea, and to go and visit the crafts people in their homes. And it would be interested in knowing...when I say Garry Barker was, by the time I'm involved, the Garry name, I associate with it now Jerry. Because, when these buyers could come to town, or these magazine writers would come to town, we would go, we would take them to Berea. I mean brew was one of the...I mean so, it, it was, I think it was compatible, and that you would always take them to Churchill Weavers. Perry Ellis, the designer, I remember taking Churchill Weaver throws to him. And he wanted to use them, because they felt Scottish. He was in the Scottish fashion line at that time. And I...it would be interesting to hear it from their perspective, but from mine, I didn't feel any friction at all.

Brown Forman would give money to both organizations sporadically over the years, although a huge contributor to this organization.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, there has been a certain amount of friction with the establishment of the Artisan Center in Berea, because local crafts people have felt that setting this up, basically outside of town on the, on the expressway, might siphon off...hurts Main Street's business. Were you aware of those kinds of conflicts?

MATEUS: No, see, that was, that was after my time. I mean I...you know that art, Artisan Center in Berea. I mean it finished before I ever heard of it. I don't know even how it was funded. They didn't ask Brown Forman funding for that, and it just kind of appeared. And it would be, it would be...if I were going there, my destination would still be downtown. I go there for curiosity, but I would still go to Boone Tavern **[Laughing]**. You know, I would have the spoon bread. And I mean Churchill Weavers. It was just so sad to me to see what happened to Churchill Weavers, when I saw. We kind of heard about that late, and there just wasn't time to...I know Phyllis and her son really tried to help awhile, and I was getting ready to retire. And crafts was not, just like politics I was...I've done my nine years in politics. So, I'm not going to do that anymore **[Laughing]**. And I've kind of had my craft day, too; I'm interested in farming now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I've interviewed both Lila and Richard, and talked about what happened at Churchill, and how that came about and whatnot. In some ways it is a sad story, and some ways it's a wonderfully inspiring story, because God bless them, they saved samples of everything they ever did. They have such wonderful archival exhibition stuff. It's just terrific. Other than, other than the groups you've talked about, were there any other buyers who were flown in and shown around the state?

MATEUS: When they had the markets...and I'm sure Frank N. Parkinson...and I think people came from all over. You know, small specialty shops maybe. People who did antique fairs and I think the Heart of Country in Nashville. I mean it was, it was...and corporation's would go to buy for their corporate gifts. And, it's kind of expedited, because of its food. I don't know if you got to the one this year, but there would be books, a book section, a food section. And it's more maybe the part, the whole Kentucky crowd. Or, could be part of the whole Kentucky crowd.

WILLIHNGANZ: What was the reaction to the national interest that resulted from this activity?

MATEUS: I think it was pride. You know, to see that you were in the New York Times, and or you would have, you know a throw in the Neiman Marcus Catalog. This is Churchill Weavers, this is really good. And in just the...I think pride. And what, what we liked, the feel good part of it, was there was some craft families that were able to change their lives, at least for awhile, because of the income they got from this. I think, and I don't know what has happened to some of them, but I think of...I mean they were literally put on the map for awhile. There was a Valley Hill Herbs and Everlastings outside of Springfield, Kentucky, and a sweet family, the Barber family. And they had a

bunch of kids. And they had decorated, they decorated these straw hats. And it was very fashionable, and they were worn to the Derby. Marion, Chance, and Phyllis, I mean. I got married once in one of them. **[Laughing]** It was like...and they were sought after. And, and then, they had a tea room on the side. I mean it was Agra-tourism years ago. And I don't know what happened to, you know, some...I know some had problems in just handling success. Some had problems in running their, their crafts business like a business, and I know that the Foundation tried to have workshops. I'm sure Fran tried to have workshops. I think for awhile there were some workshops held in conjunction with the market. And but, their...Fran could tell you better than I where the success stories really were. There is a rug weaver in Lexington who will do beautiful rugs for you, and you pay by the foot. Like runners. Minnie Adkins, certainly, Marvin Finn. I mean we took the Bloomingdale buyers to Marvin Finn's, when he was over in the projects. And he was just amazed that people would want...I mean we found him. David Mahoney is someone you should talk to too. Do you know David? He is an artist, I mean he has done...he taught art at Atherton, or someplace like that. He is retired; he does a lot of work for Louisville Stoneware's. He worked closely with Christy Brown at Louisville Stoneware. And Al and David were very close and, and...pottery. But I lost my train of thought. What I was going to say, the. Ask me another question. **[Laughing]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, we've been looking at some of the effects of the basic purchasing movements that have gone on. I did an interview with Walter Cornelison from Bybee Pottery. Wonderful gentleman.

MATEUS: Oh, how is Walter?

WILLIHNGANZ: He is...I don't know how old he is exactly.

MATEUS: Eighty?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. He's up there, yeah, and he lives at home with his wife, and son's basically running the business.

MATEUS: That's still around?

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, yeah. I came through and I walked through that place, and I shot it, in fact. And I talked with him. And he said, you know, when they got approached by the New York buyers. They were so overwhelmed by the quantities that they wanted, that they said, you know, there was really no way they could make their products in the way they've made them, and preserve the integrity of the products, to make them on that kind of mass production level. And, I'm aware that different cooperations or different organizations take a different tack on how they want to go. And, if you look at Louisville Stoneware for instance, it's not mass manufacturing. They are not using molds and things, but it is much more of a numbers game. And they've gotten into the malls, and done much more serious marketing than a lot of people have.

MATEUS: Well, part of the Bybee...they loved Bybee. That's what Bloomingdales...just loved it. It was shipping it. How were we going to wrap it to ship it? And actually, at least at two of the events we had in New York. We took trucks. We took a truck to L.A. for the...in fact, at L.A. we were going to be featured at Bloomingdales, at the end of Rodeo...excuse me...Neiman Marcus at the end of Rodeo Drive. Big opening sponsored by this woman's association in Beverly Hills. And the owner of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, very chichi...Hernandez Courtwright, had the American Flag and the California flag flying, and we...Steve Wilson was going to orchestrate the parties. And, we were going to have this big party in Beverly Hills. And we were going to take a truck. Karen Horseman and another person took the truck out with all of these crafts loaded on, and they wanted, we wanted Mr. Courtwright to fly the American, or Kentucky flag over the Beverly Wilshire, along with the American and California flag for this promotion. Well, he wasn't going to have any part of that. We probably didn't even get close to him and ask him. It was probably the manager, said no. So we dispatched in Woody Lampton. And Mr. Lampton went out several days ahead of time, and by the time we got there the flag, the Kentucky flag, was flying. **[Laughing]** And, he was dining with Hernandez Courtwright. **[Laughing]** Come in. We'll have lunch. We'll have dinner, you know, and it just...and he just charmed everybody. So we had ambassadors like Dinwitty, who got caught up in this, even though they didn't work in crafts at all. And, of course, the opera, the Louisville Opera, the Kentucky Opera, was having the major fundraiser... was the Hard Scuffle Steeplechase, and they would do booths in pavilions of Kentucky Crafts. A lot of companies attended the Hard Scuffle Steeplechase; it was the last weekend in May. As equally as an entertaining venue...just like the Kentucky Derby. It was a bit more manageable than Churchill Downs. And, if you had a beautiful sunny day on the banks of the Ohio River and you have your steeplechase. People in linen suits and straw hats and beautiful dresses, and there are just crafts, would be all over the place. It would be the future. The thing...trends come and go. And back to the Bloomingdale thing though, you know, we were at a crafts...where there was a real lust for things made by hand. And, I think that there is even flow for that, and it will happen again, and it's happened probably several times since 1980. Just like fashions come and go. But right now, there is a particular distain for things from China, as there should be. That, so...and we've even encouraged here to have more exhibits of wearables, and things that people...scarves or maybe jewelry. Or, after awhile, how many pieces of art do you need for your home? Or, identifying what is what, what is it that, what craft is it, that a consumer who is in their 60's, and has furnished their homes. They're probably going to buy crafts for gifts. Maybe a wedding gift. I mean we, we really try to promote that here as it, as a lasting gift. Give a Kentucky Craft, because it is unique. It's made by hand, but it is memorable, and it will last. That has been the hook, I know, that this organization has tried to, to promote in the gallery sales. I'm not for sure about...Fran can tell you more about the buyers in Berea.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Now, you were involved in the creation of what's now the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, it was the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation at that time. Can you tell us a little bit about how it was created and who the key players were?

MATEUS: Well. We were in State Government, and it was you could not use state tax dollars to go out and have a party in New York, or have a party in Beverly Hills. And we needed to raise funds independently, and made sense to have a non-profit 501c3 foundation to do that, and that's why we set that up. Mary Shands, Al Shands, Donna Hall, Phyllis, and myself, were the most active participants in founding it. A woman named an attorney in the Governor's Office, Carol Butler, who is in the mayor's office here now. Carol helped with the writing, and Jerry Abramson was actually legal counsel then, in the Governor's Office. So they drafted the articles of whatever, for the 501c3, and we had a big launch. And we raised some money for it. And with that, with those funds we were able to entertain and do things you wouldn't use tax payers, tax dollars for. Alan Merriam donated this original space right down the street, 609 West Main. And we just began to have exhibits. And Rita Steinberg was the first Executive Director for many years. She is in Indianapolis now. But Rita is somebody. You should talk to too. And Rita and I can see the major annual fund raiser. I would...they are having one this week. I don't remember how many years it's been, but twenty-four, twenty-five, maybe twenty-five, twenty-six years for the Bourbon Ball. But in some years, the Bourbon Ball would raise, you know, more than 100 thousand dollars. It was the major fundraiser for this organization. And, as time evolved, Marlene Grissom became very involved. They built this new headquarters. Steve Wilson stayed involved off and on over the years. But, we began to see the name of the foundation was misleading to people. It was a good name for how it originated, but people thought we were giving money away, or and we were out trying to raise money. And so, they changed it to the Kentucky Museum, it was MAD; it was Kentucky Museum of Art and Design, KMAD. And this didn't set well. It didn't set well with a lot of us, because we had Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the similar name, you know, and design, you know, design to many of us, design says architecture or interior design. And so, we squabbled. And the board...and we tweak it, and we would have strategic sessions. I mean Steve Wood, President of LG&E, was helping lead strategy session. So, we had a lot of good...Mary Stoner, Libby Parkinson...there have been wonderful people over the years, who have given a lot of their time. Lindy Street...to the organization...so we changed the name to Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft. One now, the American Folk Art in New York, has changed their name to Art and Design. **[Laughing]** So, Marlene is going to say, "I told you Art and Design was a good name". **[Laughing]** Oh well, you know, we were ahead of our time.

WILLIHNGANZ: How were the state craft program and the Kentucky Art and Craft activities related? How did the two co-exist in the early years?

MATEUS: Well. Because the founders, I mean, kind of, I kind of felt that Fran was one of my kids. You know, she was still there kind of taking care of things, and even though I was at Brown Forman. Through the years, you know, Brown Forman would help her with wine for a dinner, or this or that. We were all involved. This organization...I just think it, it was we...it was this network of people who had shared a common goal of promoting crafts, and identifying new. And you had to constantly...had to have...you have to feed the, the beast, so to speak. You've got to be able to identify new people all the time, and you want this tradition to continue. And, I'm not that sure about how much

it is continuing. I mean, I see some people doing things. But most of the people that I have mentioned today, they are probably in their 50's, 60's 70's or older. But nurturing that next generation...and I, I think Brian is doing a strong job with that here. In, in the exhibit center here. And I see, I do see new people at the market, but it was just a connection. It was a network of people who shared a common purpose, and again I may be being overly optimistic about it. But, I didn't see friction.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you think both organizations were necessary?

MATEUS: I think...let me go back and say, when John Y. Brown became Governor we had a Kentucky Arts Council. We still have a Kentucky Arts Council, I think, and it's probably changed over the years. In those days, I mean Phyllis and John move very quickly. I mean they are high energy people. He was elected in November, and the inauguration I think was a month later, and, you know, the first or second week of December. And Phyllis immediately said, "I want all Kentucky art in the Governor's Mansion for the inaugural. I mean bring all these people in and I want Kentucky art there". And the Arts Council said, "Oh, we couldn't possible do it that quickly". "Okay. We will do it this way". And off she went. So the Arts Council, Anne Ogden and people like that, were invited. The industry here, and perspective on that, they were the Arts Council. And so, here comes this whirlwind...that coming...and Steve and I, Wilson, are working for John Y. and Phyllis. And they want it. We know the state, we know where to find these people, and you know, it is Miss America, and so it happened. And I think that came around, because gradually, John appointed his own Arts Council. And as terms expired he got his people or like-minded people on there. And it wasn't, it wasn't that we were cross-purposes. It was just...and it was moving at a different pace and different priorities. And Larry Hackley would be another fascinating person to talk to. Larry does this cane. He does a lot of wooden canes. And he probably has the best collection of wooden canes, and probably deal...I think he is in Bowling Green, or some place like that. And, I think, they would like to have killed us probably, that first year or so. But, we all kind of got, you know, got...it was a good things happening.

WILLIHNGANZ: What were some of the other significant activities that occurred while you were the Commissioner of the Art Department; you were Commissioner of the Department of Arts?

MATEUS: Well, again. The, the shows, the openings with Bloomingdales...bring the buyers in. Made Sixth Avenue...some people here developed the first...the first development of the Kentucky Arts Center...being built. We just were breaking ground for it, and it was dedicated in '82. So, we were in the process of bonds being issued. Previous Governor Julian Carroll and the, the Christy *[unintelligible]* Brown, Marlene Grissom, and a few other couples perhaps, had restored the first building. As the West Main Street development started, re-development started to occur. They, Sixth and Main, they restored that building beautifully. Again, the Kentucky Center is being built. The Shands buy some property in this block, and so you begin to get this renaissance that was starting on West Main. I mean, it took twenty years for it to continue, you know, on down to the Burnheim Building, that Brown Forman did...21 C to the process

got started in those years. Actress had been restored, I think in the late 70's, and so...a movement in Louisville. Also a movement statewide in identifying...just raising the bar. I mean, I think the Paducah...what's happening in Paducah had its genesis back in the early 80's. Because of this attention that we focused on art and craft. And then the, the embroidery museum, these, all came like...Shelly Zegart got her start. There was a guy named Bruce Mann, and Shelly Zegart, that were kind of interested in quilts. And we had a little exhibit, and so you, you just start raising it. We started working closely with the Speed Museum. That's how I ended up at Brown-Forman. The chairman of Brown-Forman was chairman of the Speed Museum. And we had...we shared a press conference. We brought Armand Hammer's to exhibits. And, over one hundred thousand people, seeing an exhibit in Kentucky in the early 80's...which was a big deal. It raised a lot of money for the University of Kentucky Art Museum. And also, when he came to the Speed, which was later, but we submitted it then. Just, just there is just a lot of wonderful center and things going on. Dr. Hammer's curator loved baseball, so when he came in to do the, the Speed Museum exhibit. You know, he was into Louisville Slugger. He wanted a little Louisville Slugger bat and a little...sure, you can have a jacket, and here is a bottle of bourbon to go with it, **[Laughing]** you know. So, there was this great dovetailing, the Jim Beam bourbon bottles, and they would, they would do a special bottle every year for the Bourbon Ball and auction it off. So it was a dovetailing of economic development, bourbon, one of the oldest industries in the state. And then you asked the other thing that we did. A lot with the Democratic National Convention, with the National Governor's Association. Yeah, that is where we first met Bill Clinton. And I mean we are giving out Kentucky gifts, when he appears. And Arkansas' not so bad either, you know, and he was Governor of Arkansas at the time. And you know Hillary was saying that is a good idea, I think I'll go back and do some crafts in Arkansas. And so it was largely...you know, I give the Brown's, John Y. and Phyllis huge, huge marks for, for driving that engine.

WILLIHNGANZ: What major changes have you seen with the Kentucky Arts and Museum Art and Craft over the course of its history?

MATEUS: They...the museum didn't really start out to do as much emphasis on, or the Foundation didn't start out to do as much emphasis on children's education programs. And it, it really...the original mission was truly to promote and market Kentucky Crafts, Art and Crafts. But largely, crafts. And craft I should say, and do workshops for these people to help show them, you know, how to be better business people, how to market your crafts. And, over the years it, it in fund raising...it's always positive to talk about educating children. That was a nice hook. And when they did so, when they started children's programs, and or, there would be classes on...we're on the third floor, but they...the floor where they just do kids programs. And when I became, I became President again, three or four, five years ago, and I was so surprised to see what are the goals, because I think that I'm an honorary board member, and just brainstorming with Rita. But, I saw the goal was to reach every sixth grader in Jefferson County. And I thought that's not possible. It's not possible, by the size of this building. It's not possible with the funds we have, but that goal had gotten written into the strategy, because it helped raise money to do this building. And I thought, you know, this is a

Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, and they have a great program we call the suitcase program. Where the suitcases go out to the different schools, and it's like a teacher can build a small, you know, a three week curriculum around this suitcase about art and craft. So, that's kind of an outreach program for students. I can, I can see that. I...but it has changed, to have a lot of emphasis on children...not bad. But, I think it is unrealistic to say we are going to reach every school child, and is that so? And should not a school bus from Simpson County have as much right to come in here, and have a tour, and have a class as, as Lincoln Elementary, coming every semester? Which they do. And, so it, it's not bad but it's, it's hard to embrace that educational element of it. I think. I mean, then we started charging admission. We never charged admission before. And, but yet, times have changes. There is a lot of competition out there for money. And, I think they do great programming here, and we have a pretty successful fundraising program. Having the three gallery areas, the gift shop. I think, I think it feels very stable.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, do you see any conflict between the children's art programs that you're doing, and the children's free art programs that the LVAA is doing?

MATEUS: Well, the organization...you're going to find, if you haven't already, but about five years ago there was a lot of competition to merge the two. And it was initiated by LVAA, because they were in greater financial trouble than this organization. And, we actually had a lot of meetings. And we were kind of heading down that path. They had an endowment that was administered by the University of Louisville. The endowment was pretty strong, but their ongoing operational fundraising was pretty lame. So the, Alan Cowan, with Fund for the Arts, saw an opportunity to perhaps merge the two. And I would say we were, we became, our boards became open to that, and then they got a new Executive Director, who said wait a minute, give me a chance. And so the talks broke down. And, I don't know I think it is arising. I think everybody, rising tide of sail boats, and if we can do what we can do here. And maybe this is Saturday morning, and people sign up, and it is...if somebody wants to come from Simpson County, they can. And then LVAA is certainly more Louisville focused, and that's...

WILLIHNGANZ: What overall impact do you feel the early state craft initiative is, and those continue to be developed, such as the Artisan Center in Berea, are having on this state?

MATEUS: Again, I, I think strong factors for tourism. We say right now, you know, people are vacationing closer to home. I believe our Lt. Governor has a mission on eco-tourism, green tourism. And certainly, things that are made by hand, and frequently by nature, that fit that category very well. I think that's something that can be focused on. I don't know if Brian has any green exhibits, but that is an idea. We should have a green exhibit here. So, I know its things that are real, are always going to have appeal over things that are plastic.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes. I would hope so. *[Willihnganz laughs]* Once you went to Brown-Forman did you continue to stay involved with crafts and the programs that you helped initiate?

MATEUS: Yes. Brown-Forman is probably the largest, between Brown-Foreman the Company and Brown Family. I think we are probably...they are probably the largest contributors to this organization, combined over the years. And, I saw bourbon as a Kentucky Craft, and the opportunity to work together. We created the Early Times Scholarship Fund. Which, I think, later became the Woodford Reserve's Scholarship Fund, where five, three to five Kentucky Artisans would get money each year, to study and their, whatever they wanted to study that was related to art and craft. And sponsorships...we, we hosted one of the Bourbon Balls at Brown-Forman, which was great fun to do. And it was, it was mutually beneficial, though because Brown-Forman is kind of down on the West End, and a lot of people won't, maybe have never been to 18th Street, to see one of the corporate campus' which was designed by the Homestead Firm. And at the same time, it allowed our Brown-Forman employees to see why we embrace the crafts. And, I also got the opportunity to buy art for Brown-Forman for many years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Lucky you.

MATEUS: Lucky me. And so, we have quite...the company has quite a fine collection of, of twentieth century art, and you know, I was, I was known as the go to. And my successor in that area at Brown-Forman was just president of Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, so there has been a lot of energy between the companies. And Eric Doninger was President until most recent...his last term president. And Eric is continuing, he now buys art for Brown-Forman. So I hope he will carry on.

WILLIHNGANZ: I've been to that corporate headquarters on various occasions, and yes, it is very stunning over there. *[Willihnganz laughs]*

MATEUS: I said just keep buying art. Yes, it was great. *[Laughter]*

WILLIHNGANZ: It's just wonderful, what an assignment.

MATEUS: It was wonderful.

WILLIHNGANZ: What other observations or information would you like to share that I may not have covered?

MATEUS: That is, I think it is, it's a defining part of Kentucky culture. And it is a part of something that, that for those of us who are involved with this organization and with the Guild as well, should hold the future leaders feet to the fire, to continue to fund and promote it. There are tourism and marketing dollars that, I think, go into procures, and I believe, I'm sure, the current Secretary of Commerce, Marcheta Sparrow, is a supporter

of crafts as tourism. And to keep it in the forefront of one of those unique aspects of Kentucky...that's worth saving.

WILLIHNGANZ: Indeed it is. Thank you so...

[End of recording.]