KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY AND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.
Interview with Victoria Faoro
Interviewer is Mary Reed
Videographer is Daniel Coy

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Mary Reed: Hi Victoria. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Let's start out by you telling us a little about yourself and your family and give us some background.

Victoria Faoro: Well, I grew up in rural New York state on a dairy farm. The oldest of six daughters. My father was a first generation Italian, my mother's family had been in the United States for a long time, they moved from the British Isles. We grew up quite poor, (laughs) but learned very early on how to cook and I started sewing when I was about five and we had a great life actually on the farm. I went to a very small school, public school with about 200 students grade K-12. Very early on I learned that I just loved visual arts. I loved what I saw around the farm. It was a very beautiful part of the country. I also learned that I liked business (laughs). As a 12-year-old I was making Barbie doll clothes and packaging them and selling them on my grandmother's porch (??) day and those kind of interests continued throughout my life. I did graduate from the State University of New York at Albany with a major in English and a minor in English Honors and a New York State teaching certification for grades 7-12. I stayed an additional year and completed a master's degree in English with a concentration in 19th century American literature and then went off to teach school - public school, again, in rural New York State for 5 years. I taught grades 8-12 and was involved in developing some elective programs and things like that while I was there. Then I ended up going with a friend and living in Dublin, Ireland for a year and working with a family there. I came back and moved to western New York State in Buffalo where I worked with the assistant state director of Veteran's Employment. They were doing an outreach program for Vietnam Veterans because their benefits were running out, so we published a newspaper and also did the PR packets for the first National Vietnam Era Veteran's week. Involved with that. From there I ended up going to Westchester County of New York State...

Reed: Now, this would have been the early 70s?

Faoro: This would have been...No, it would have been late 70s. Moved down there and worked for an educational (??) materials company editing their teacher's guides. And then I kept moving back and forth (laughs). I ended up going back to Cooperstown, New York. While I was in Westchester County I had started quilting. I had begun that actually when I was teaching. I was just making babies quilts for friends and family, but while in Westchester County I decided to try and make some money at it. Maybe eventually make a living at it. So, when I moved to Cooperstown, that's what I was doing full time, making art pieces, pillows, things like that and participating in national craft shows that were in the northeast region.

Reed: Now, did you learn this from your mother or your grandmother?

Faoro: No, I had learned to sew early on and I had a lot of scraps because when I was in high school, I made all my clothes and I sort of carted those scraps around for years. I actually learned from books. Just took a book, actually it was Patchwork Primer and started quilting. In Cooperstown, I continued quilting and selling the quilts, but I also began teaching quilting and that, I found, I really enjoyed. I had not particularly enjoyed teaching English (laughs), but when people really wanted to learn what I was teaching, I found it was great fun. So, that's something I continued to do for many years.

Reed: Did you hand-piece?

Faoro: I actually machine-pieced, but hand quilted and I've since done a little bit of machine quilting, but I've always preferred hand quilting. So, I continued with that but, I loved business but I wasn't very good at it (laughs). As a craftsperson making a living at it, I decided I was going to be making potholders probably eventually (laughs), full time, if I kept at it. So I started working for a college in Oneonta, New York, which was right nearby. Moved to Oneonta and I worked...

Reed: Spell that for me, if you could?

Faoro: O-N-E-O-N-T-A.

Reed: When we have this transcribed, I want to get it right. (laughs)

Faoro: (laughs) Yes, that's always good. But, I got involved there with a regional-- well, actually, first I started with the college, I was an adjunct instructor helping students who were not about to pass the writing exams, so I was tutoring them basically, in writing. At the same time, I was also showing quilts at the regional arts council there and eventually ended up joining the staff part-time because they were kind of piloting a new artists in the school's program. The New York State's Arts Council had been funding that for the first time. So, I actually participated in a pilot program as an artist as well as an administrator. We tried it in three different schools and it was very successful and I joined the staff, eventually, as its director (??) Community Council of the Arts and we were eventually running an artists in the school's program in 26 schools in 17 districts in a 5 county region, so it was a really successful program. And we basically worked as the broker. We developed a catalog that made it clear what the artist would do and limited the amount of classes they would participate in in a given day. Really detailed what they'd be paid, what they're transportation costs would be and then worked with the schools to get matching programs...

Reed: This is public school?

Faoro: Public schools. And the nice thing is, the program is still in existence today, which is very exciting, because that was probably 25 years ago. We were able to institutionalize it by offering it, eventually, through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services in those two regions. So, that was, I think, one of the most exciting projects for me. The Arts Council also ran a foreign film program, a dance performance program and we had a gallery that displayed work from regional artists and sold it. So that was really my first involvement with really helping artists find a market and I worked a lot with displaying those shows and just helping artists be able to make a living and we also ran an annual festival for 5 days and lot of the performers were able to work through that. Our main mission was just to see that artists were paid for what they did, which hadn't always been the case, especially with school programs (laughs). So, that was very exciting. As I had worked as a...and I was still at that point doing quite a bit of quilting, as well and in the course of my work, I had gotten involved with...or I met a couple of acquisition editors from the American Quilting Society who were living in Cazenovia, New York and I had started writing some articles for them. One of the things I had done from the beginning when I was making quilts was that I had photographed the process. So, I started doing articles that showed how I had made a particular quilt. How it was designed, how it was constructed. And they were very interested in that, so eventually, they got in touch with me and were interested in my possibly coming and working for them. The American Quilting Society is a division of Schrader Publishing, which at the time they were a big publisher of antiques price guides and they had never actually developed their own editorial department for the quilting publications, so that is what I came to Paducah to do in 1990.

Reed: So you were recruited to move from New York to Paducah?

Faoro: ...To move to Paducah. Which I was very nervous about it (laughs). I kept my house in Oneonta, New York because I wasn't sure that I would enjoy Paducah, but it ended up that I've enjoyed Kentucky a great deal. At the American Quilters Society, I was involved in editing their magazine, which at that time had a circulation of about 70,000 internationally and also helping them get more involved in publishing books and those books in most cases, were how to books so that's how I kind of came to Kentucky, to do that. They, in the back of their minds, knew that they wanted to open a quilt museum and while I was in Oneonta, I had worked with with gallery shows at the arts council, but I'd also worked with Hartwick College in their gallery program a little bit, so that was attractive to them. So, by the time I got there, they had begun to work with an architect on this museum they were envisioning and I was able to work with them a little bit from a functional standpoint because I had worked in something like that...

Reed: So, you were with the museum from the ground up, then?

Faoro: Yes. It was very exciting (laughs). Yes, I was. It was wonderful to be able to work with the people who had envisioned this museum, which was built to honor today's quilter. Quilts had been shown in museums and quilts had been collected by museums for many years, but this really was meant to be a museum that was really dedicated to people making quilts today. It was really honoring them. It was exciting to be able to work with the founders and understand that whole mission and sort of help make it a reality. They already had a collection of quilts that they had accumulated over the years. The American Quilters Society's annual show which draws about 35,000 people to Paducah, doubling the population there, had been going on since 1985. And the Top awards became part of the collection. They were given a monetary award and then if they accepted the award they agreed to donate the quilt so they had some really spectacular quilts in the collection already. So the museum was really developed with the idea of giving a great home to those so people could come and see them at different times of the year.

Reed: When was this museum built?

Faoro: 1991 is when it opened. It opened a year after I arrived in Paducah. And one of the things about the American Quilters Society is that right from the beginning, one of their main goals was to recognize the value of what quilters were doing. You know, quilting has traditionally been a women's art and it's traditionally been pretty undervalued. You know, people talk about them as blankets, as though they are functional pieces and lots of them are functional. but they're also very beautiful and involve a lot of artistry and craftsmanship.

Reed: I think that's what the museum did, I mean, we had our historic quilts and they did serve a very functional purpose, but all of the sudden designer quilts became a part of our everyday world, too, that people could see. The creative spark and not just repeating the same old pattern over and over again, yes.

Faoro: And some of that had been in the works already. In 1971, there was a really important exhibit at the Whitney Museum of Art of quilts as art as sort of abstract art almost. They were Amish quilts and that same year there was an exhibit here in the Kentucky that also treated quilts as art and that traveled to different locations. So that had been happening and the women's movement contributed to it, too. But, you know, Schrader's and the American Quilters Society had a lot to do with moving that forward. That first show, they decided to offer really significant monetary awards, so I think the best of show quilt that first year received an $8,000 award, which was huge at the time. And they had since increased those over the years with sponsorships and things, but it really did do a lot for people to begin to think their quilt might be worth something (laughs). That it might be a valuable artwork and the museum was meant to further that. As we were developing the museum, we decided to...in addition to having quilts from the collection, which are in the main gallery, there were two other side galleries, so we decided to try to always have one historical exhibit in one side and a special contemporary exhibit on the other side, so your sort of treating quilting as a continuum. It's hard to overestimate the impact that the quilting society and the museum have had on quilting both in the state and around the world.

Reed: Did you also have a retail gallery there?

Faoro: Thank you. Yes. (laughs) As we were building the museum, one of the things I was personally committed to was that I wanted to sell ... I wanted to stay away from commercial stuff as much as we could and really sell works made by artists and one of the first trips we made was to the Kentucky Crafted Market and we bought a lot that first year and some of those people are still being carried by the museum, so that was a nice way to introduce some new people and of course we had a lot of people from the riverboats that stop all the time in Paducah, so it was really introducing people around the country to Kentucky crafts.

Reed: Did you purchase a lot from the craft co-ops here in Eastern Kentucky or?

Faoro: We did and from individuals. There are a lot of really wonderful artists in the western Kentucky region, as well, that we found, in some cases individually. One of the first events that the museum held annually was the Arts in Action festival, we called it. And it was all regional artists and one of the requirements was, not only did you come and sell your work, but you had to demonstrate as well, so it was really meant to be, sort of, educational to introduce students and adults alike to what goes in to making crafts, because again, that idea of just helping people understand and value them.

Reed: So, were their quilts all just fabric or were other mediums used?

Faoro: Actually the quilts were all fabric. And most of them were in keeping with the traditional 3 layers, you know, a top, a filler and a backing, but there were some exceptions to that and there were some ... We also had an exhibit of Russian garments at one point. A lot of variety in the exhibits that were offered.

Reed: But all fibers.

Faoro: All fibers, yes.

Reed: Sometimes you see trivets that are quilt patterns made out of wood...

Faoro: In the shop we would have things like that, but in the gallery we actually had quilts. And while I was in Paducah, I was also on the founding board of the Paducah Film Society, which is also still in existence. Involved with the Paducah Renaissance Program in the downtown area, so I really tried to be involved with as many things as I could that helped further the arts.

Reed: Wasn't Paducah one of the first communities in Kentucky that tried to revitalized their downtown area?

Faoro: They did and they've done a beautiful job with it. They did a lot with the riverfront, they have murals. Robert Dafford from Louisiana came in and has painted, I'm not sure what the number is now, we were there just recently, it's extraordinary...

Reed: On the flood wall?

Faoro: On the flood walls. Just renovated a lot of the downtown buildings.

Reed: Seems like they tried to recruit artists into those old buildings...

Faoro: The Lower Town program really kind of developed as a result of all of this and that program has been very successful. Paducah is a very different kind of community in some ways, because it is so remote from the rest of Kentucky, I mean it's way out west. Yes, (laughs). It's closer to Nashville than it is to Louisville, for example. It is a community where individuals just take it upon themselves to make things happen they work cooperatively locally rather than necessarily thinking about having to involve the state or national assistance and that Lower Town program is a perfect example because that is a case of an artist, a city employee and a local bank working together to get that going and it has been quite successful and has really renovated that part of the city beautifully.

Reed: I read about it. It's on my bucket list.

Faoro: It's well worth a visit. Paducah is, as a whole. And as I mentioned, I was involved with the quilt museum and publishing and I was kind of working with both of them, off and on (laughs). Eventually, one of my board members, Gerry Montgomery, who was a past mayor of Paducah was on the board of the Kentucky Artisan Center as well. As that project started to develop, both she and Lou felt like I might be a good person to help with that.

Reed: I was going to say, how did you get here in Berea from Paducah (laughs)? That's a long way off.

Faoro: (laughs) It is. In 2001, I was appointed by Governor Patton to help finish planning the Artisan Center and they really wanted someone on board in January so for 6 months I commuted back and forth because I needed to give the museum time to do a national search for the directorship.

Reed: Is that 5 hours? 6?

Faoro: 4 hours and a time zone change (laughs). But anyway, that's how I got involved with the Artisan Center. I've been so fortunate to have been involved with really 3 startup programs that were very rewarding to work with. The arts and education program back in Oneonta, the quilt museum and now the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.

Reed: All very successful.

Faoro: Well, one of the things I learned... Yes, they are. (laughs) But one of the things I've learned over the years is, I have a set of skills that I think work especially well for starting things up. Over time, somebody help has stronger skills and specific areas, but I have a broad base of skills that is really helpful. I started out college as a math major, because that's where my natural abilities are. My interests were in humanities, so that's where I ended up, but that math ability, I think, allows me to, a lot of times as an administrator, understand the arts side of it and the people side of it, but also be able to do budgets and make projects as self-supporting as possible.

Reed: You also have to be very organized.

Faoro: (laughs) I think I drive people crazy sometimes with that, but anyway. It was very exciting to be involved right from the beginning with the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.

Reed: And you helped with the design of it? The building or?

Faoro: The building...You know, Charles Jolly and Carol Meyers from Lexington were the architects and they brought great skill to it and just a wonderful sense of creating a building that is beautiful and comfortable and isn't overwhelming and we did involve AGI, a firm out of Covington, to do the interior design and that was something that we just felt really strongly about. We didn't just want a building and then try to put stuff in it. We wanted the inside to go with the outside and to go with what we were doing. So they were very helpful. They were the ones who came up with the idea of you walking, after the lobby, first into an exhibit area, which sets a different tone than if you walked into something that just looks like a store. So they brought a lot of expertise to it, too. What I brought to it, probably most, was just hands on, day to day, knowing what it's like to run a store and work with artists. I made sure there was the space to be able to receive inventory and process it. I made sure just a lot of the nitty gritty of every day kinds of things were there.

Reed: And it has feeling... the building, of being handmade.

Faoro: Which it really was. I mean, there were stone masons, Kentucky stone masons, I think there was a team of as many as 7 of them there, working for an entire year. I mean, they wore out jeans breaking the stone which had been quarried in Harrodsburg, over their knees to get the size that was right for filling in a particular place. I thought it was really interesting that they actually switched places periodically so that one part of the wall didn't look like Joe Smith's and the other one like Bob Jones', you know? I mean, so that really was an art and a Kentucky company made the chairs for the dining room, which is not easy to do when you're a state facility and there are the elaborate purchasing structures and things (laughs), but we sort of picked where it really mattered and went with artists and businesses whenever we could.

Reed: How thick are those walls? Because they are rock on the inside as well as the outside.

Faoro: There's rock on the inside and the outside, but there is cinder block in the middle.

Reed: Insulation.

Faoro: Insulation, of course, yeah. It's not real thick, but it is all hand...

Reed: It's like it's all faced. Yeah. And lots of wooden beams...

Faoro: We tried to keep with cherry, which is an important Kentucky wood. Just really that whole idea of it being a comfortable place for people to come because we weren't wanting to build a facility that was going to be just for people who are totally into the arts or just for people who have a lot of money to spend on the arts. We really wanted to build a facility where lots of people, lots of different people would be introduced to the arts that was being created in the state. We didn't want anybody to feel intimidated when they walked into the facility, we always tried to offer not just high-end crafts, but a range, so that anybody coming in that facility could come away with a little something made in Kentucky, if they wanted to. We had great board and building committee that worked with us on that. We wanted it to be education, right from the beginning and tried to work in education in any way we could, from things like the way we labeled products, to the exhibits, to information that was sometimes added to packaging of products to make people understand what went into something.

Reed: Demonstrations?

Faoro: Demonstrations. That was an important part of the plan. And just every time we could introduce some education about crafts we tried to do that. The Kentucky Crafted Program and the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen were both really important for us, because they linked us right from the beginning to artists. I remember sitting in --- The City of Berea gave us space in their jail area downstairs and we stored our crafts as they came in (laughs). As orders came in they were stored in the jail cell actually, it was very secure. But we started out with a very small staff down there, processing things as they came in and without the Craft Marketing program and the Guild, I don't know that we would have gotten up on our feet as quickly as we did. I think when we opened, we had about 250 artists we were working with and by the time I left I think it was up to about 700 all over the state.

Reed: I just remembered that if you were a juried member of the Kentucky Craft Marketing program or the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen then your work would automatically be accepted into the Artisan Center because you knew their work was of quality.

Faoro: Right, because that was a thing. Even if something was only going to sell for a dollar, we wanted a quality that looked, that made it work with everything. Yea, so we didn't feel we had to jury people if they'd been juried into those programs. But, at the same time we wanted to allow other people who were maybe earlier in their careers or whatever, to be able to have work sold there, so we did have jurying four times a year where we would invite people to submit work and we did accept a lot of people who were not in those programs. And often I think we became a stepping stone to those programs and for a lot of people, we were their first wholesale experience. You know, we spent a lot of time kind of coaching people and helping them with their product, because it wasn't enough to just have a good product but it had to be a product that would sell for us to be able to carry it, because we actually generated about 70% of our operating expenses through profits from the sale of work so it was essential for us to be able to fiscally survive we had to sell...

Reed: Was the balance of it then supported by Tourism or...?

Faoro: Because we served as a rest area on the highway, we were able, through the transportation cabinet to receive some federal road funds and we had some general funds that went towards salary, so it was a combination of those three. And of course, we also had the cafe which generated some revenues as well. Sales were important, but at the same time, we also bought some things we felt were important things for people to see. Important arts for people to see, with the idea that they might...we would hope, they would sell down the road. I should mention that right from the beginning we bought the majority of the work outright, because again, our whole point was to help artists make a living. So rather than consigning most things, which is kind of typical, we decided that we...we set aside money right from the beginning as the building was being built, for that initial inventory and we purchased the majority. Gosh, I don't even think there was 5% of things at the center that were consigned.

Reed: Just high ticket items...

Faoro: It was the high ticket items or things that we felt like would look stale if they stayed there because they were unusual and we'd rather trade it out for something else than to have it sit there. The other thing that we really tried to do right from the beginning was, you know it's so hard for artists to have the cash flow they need, especially when it's the middle of the winter and they should be investing in materials to have things made for the spring shows, but there is no way to sell anything in January and February much. So we really focused on trying to do our buying at times like that when artists really needed some cash and we always tried to be flexible with the delivery times, so that if they had a big show coming up they weren't having to send us things when they could have been taking them to a show, so that was another way that we really worked a lot with artists, because I knew, I guess, from having been one myself how hard it was to be able to have money when you needed it and time when you needed it and product when you needed it. And we tried to be really understanding, you know, it's so hard for these small businesses, if someone in the family gets sick, you know, they can't produce, we'd try to be real flexible and say, you know, and say let our order be the last one and fulfill your other orders so... We tried the whole time, you know, in the planning and the opening of the center, the operation of it, to just be helping artists as much as possible. (33:57)

Reed: Sounds like you had an open communication with the artist and tried to develop a relationship with each individual...

Faoro: We did. We tried to kind of meet everybody where they were, I mean there were times when... I have great memories of going out to the parking lot to look at stuff in somebody's trunk (laughs) and we were fine with that, you know. Sometimes we'd have to do some offsite visits, but we didn't do a whole lot of driving around to see people, usually they came to us. Sometimes we'd get a call from somebody who desperately needed to sell some work and if we felt that we could use it, we'd say, you know, come on in and we'll do that, because, again, if we want wonderful arts we've got to support them. We've got to support the artist.

Reed: So did you all purchase any public art that is part of a collection there?

Faoro: Right from the beginning, we just weren't set up to be able to do that. That's a huge responsibility. It takes space that we didn't have, it takes a kind of staff that we don't have, because you have to... when you accept work into a collection, you've really got to be able to preserve it properly.

Reed: So, the Stephen Powell vases that were up in the ...

Faoro: They actually ... Now, you know, I don't know about that now, but those were actually just on loan for exhibition.

Reed: Ok. Now, didn't you incorporate some stained glass, maybe, in some of the windows?

Faoro: Well, we did, yes. That was part of the actual building. That wasn't a separate feature or anything. And we did... I had forgot about that. Yes. (laughs) Thank you. Yes, we did have glass a part of the building. I'm trying to think... I'm forgetting...

Reed: You had a hand out front...

Faoro: That's a part of the Berea Tourism program.

Reed: And you have some sculptures in the back, maybe? Robert Montgomery? That are dragons?

Faoro: Oh, those are actually on loan. That's actually come in since I was there, but...(laughs). But I assume those are on loan. And we had some metalwork also by Jeff Farmer that's over the entrance as well, as you walk back into the galleries. (laughs)

Reed: Ok. (laughs) I'm probably too busy looking in the cases at that point.

Faoro: There's a lot to distract you. For sure.

Reed: I always find that the real flowers in the restroom are such a treat.

Faoro: And that was our maintenance staff. We had a great maintenance staff. They really had wanted to make this place special and we had had some flowers in there during our grand opening and they just asked if they could continue doing that. A lot of times, they were taking them from the site and putting them in there and then we supplemented in the winter to be able to keep them both looking great. I just remembered something else I forgot...

Reed: I get that a lot too. It's a wonderful, wonderful place and I think a lot of artists really... I know they really appreciate having it there.

Faoro: Actually, one thing I forgot to mention... The center is kind of unusual because it's a rest stop, and it's certainly a place where you see and buy art, but it's also a tourism center, I mean it actually is set up to help people with their travels in Kentucky. And one of the things we really tried to do from the beginning was to encourage people to travel into Berea to see other places and we carried a lot of work by Berea artists at the center as kind of hook to get them into downtown. And we also sent people throughout the state, so our staff... We kind of created a new state position as a sales and service associate who was required to know, not just about crafts and selling crafts, but also about travel information. So they were all schooled in all sorts of attractions throughout the state as well as in Berea.

Reed: I know that in our community we have the Mountain Mushroom Festival and we were allowed to have an exhibit case in the spring to promote that festival, which is just a border county from Berea and it worked. People were referred over and they did come. They stopped in Berea and they'd come on into Estill County, Irvine for the festival. And I know that you promoted other fairs and festivals that went on too...So, your relationship with the City Berea and the artisans that have shops here, how was that?

Faoro: I mean we worked closely with a lot of them. We had people on our board who represented the community. I mean, as is always the case, if business wasn't going well somewhere, a lot of times people contributed it to competition from the Artisan Center, you know, there were good times and there were bad times with the relationship, but throughout it all, we always worked with a lot of Berea artists and we had representatives from the college and the city as well as the community on our board, so we worked them as well as we could and most of the time it was pretty successful.

Reed: Did you find that when governors changed, it affected your job at the Artisan Center or the way things were run, or was it pretty much independent?

Faoro: The fact that we were located in Berea and not in Frankfort helped us feel a little more independent than we might have been otherwise (laughs). You know, the change in governor always affects things, because new governors and new cabinet secretaries come in with different priorities. There were times when I felt I had to protect our budget a little better than others and, you know, things like that, but generally we were very fortunate in the years I was there. We were really able to retain our focus on the artists and I felt as though we kept fairly non-commercial with what we were selling and we were able to maintain...we had a lot of budget cuts, but we were able to deal with them and still further our mission. So, it really didn't keep us from functioning.

Reed: What year did the Artisan Center open?

Faoro: 2003

Reed: And when did you retire?

Faoro: I retired in...Oh, dear... I was there for 15 years from the time I started...

Reed: 2018?

Faoro: Yea, that sounds about right. No, it must have been 2016...I don't know. 2016 I think it was, when I retired. It might have been 2017. It was January...

Reed: You were actually appointed in 2001. There you go...Okay.

Faoro: Yea. Sorry, I'm so bad on those things. (laughs)

Reed: You're retired now, right? (   ) Medicare came in, I'm done. (laughs) I got that. So, now that you're retired, are you quilting?

Faoro: No, I'm cooking. Well, when I first retired, I learned bookbinding and I did some fabric bound books of poetry that a family member had written and I did a cookbook for my family and things like that. But mostly, I've been really enjoying cooking and I've been teaching cooking classes through the cooperative extension services.

Reed: What type of cooking are you teaching?

Faoro: Well, kind of a range, but I do a lot of Mediterranean cooking and a lot of primarily vegetarian cooking, but a whole lot of different things.

Reed: So, are you and Lou vegetarians?

Faoro: We're not vegetarians, but we eat a whole lot less meat than we used to and have really come to enjoy vegetables more.

Reed: So, how did you meet Lou?

Faoro: I met Lou...I was a grants panelist for the Kentucky Arts Council when I was working for the quilt museum and I was at a meeting in Lexington and he was at the time the director of the Kentucky Arts Council, so that's how we met and shortly after the whole council came to Paducah for one of their meetings and he came, so I saw him again then.

Reed: And the sparks started flying.

Faoro: (laughs) I guess you could say that!

Reed: So, how long have you all been married?

Faoro: We've been married 20...

Reed: The numbers again. (laughs)

Faoro: I know, I'm so bad with these things and I'm the math person. 26 years. And we commuted back and forth between Paducah and Frankfort for quite a few years. (laughs)

Reed: That's a long drive. Yea, from one end of the state to the other. And you've settled in Berea and built this lovely home. You designed it, I understand?

Faoro: We had a great architect work first with it and Lou had something to do with the design and we told the architect the things that were important to us, like we wanted a wonderful, big dining area so that we could have people over for dinner and we've really enjoyed that.

Reed: You've got all this wall space that is covered in art.

Faoro: We've been collecting for many years. I've always felt that if you wanted artists to keep making art you need to buy it. (laughs) Or trade early on, when I was doing craft shows and didn't have any money.

Reed: The old barter system. Yeah. So, how do you feel like your work and involvement in the arts and organizations had helped or had an effect on the individual artist and craftspeople?

Faoro: I feel as though; I've really helped some people get started...further what they were doing. I really feel that I have been able to help some artists do some things they might have not been able to do otherwise. Moral support, if nothing else. It's been wonderful. You know, I really enjoy working with artists. Always have.

Reed: Crazy artists, huh?

Faoro: And I've learned a long time ago that I was a lot better at helping artists than making art myself, as much as I enjoyed that, but ... Just like I was a better editor than I was a writer, you know? It's like, you learn over the years what your skills are.

Reed: There's that guaranteed paycheck too. (laughs)

Faoro: It helps. It helps. (laughs) But I really enjoy being an administrator and that's kind of what I ended up doing most of.

Reed: So do you have any special stories that stand out? Memories from working with artists or in these organizations that you'd like to share? I'm sure there's many.

Faoro: Not that I can think of any specific things, but it's just... I mean, I wonderful memories of walking into, say, Kentucky Crafted and I've always loved little local craft shows...I went to a million of them when I was in Western Kentucky, but that excitement of some artist showing you some new thing they've done or some new thing they've figured out...It just really makes me happy to see that. I love that excitement. I love the creativity of artists. Even if you go in some little show at some shopping mall and somebody's working with with, I don't know, leftover detergent bottles or something, I mean, they just love...they get excited about it and they do these wild things you would never think of, so whether it's that kind of craft or really fine crafts, it's exciting to see people being creative, to see them excited about something new they are doing. I don't know, I just love it, always have. (laughs)

Reed: Well, thank you for sharing your story with us. I really appreciate it.

Faoro: Thanks, Mary.