

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

**Interview with Kay Lowe-Masuhr**

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**Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz**

LOWE-MASUHR: You didn't pay attention to how long you worked. It didn't matter because you just believed in what you were doing. It you were really doing a service for people and for the state but primarily for these individuals who were scattered across Kentucky. And they're beautiful, beautiful people.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me steps you went through with this career that you had during this period of your life.

LOWE-MASUHR: Well, Public Information was made up of several different divisions, and within that Department there were creative services people who were in film and television and design work. And, most all of the creative print material that was used throughout the state, and from that we became, of course, closely involved with Phyllis George Brown. Through her excitement of her relationship that she developed...(cough) excuse me...across the state with the various artists and crafts, people particularly. I can remember that the helicopter was very active at that time, with taking Phyllis through from one end of the state to the other. From Western Kentucky to the Appalachian Mountains. She actually inspired these people to do better, and to start creating more artifacts. She originally thought of the idea of that we need a real department, a bona fide department that going to focus on this quality of this work. So, through many meetings and working through with people, and committees, and so forth, the idea for the Department of Arts became a reality. So from that...from the creative services area of Public Information, we went into the Department of Arts, and it was made up of several different divisions...crafts being one of these divisions. Again, we had film, and we had creative services which did all the design work. But the crafts division started out with just a hand full of people, and we traveled, and would go out and meet people across the state...see their work form. We've had education efforts that involved seminars and we would go to towns and hold these seminars to help people. And culture...we would bring in specialist business people that would help them define what they did and how they wanted to present it. That led to the crafts market which is now over twenty-five years old...is considered one of the premier crafts market in the United States. So, I think just by virtue of that, that the craft market is still growing, and is still involving people from across the country. For buyers and for the public. I think that that shows what the importance of how this movement started, and, in fact, we called in the crafts movement. Because the crafts people were scattered throughout the state. People have always...we've always had quilt makers, and potters, and weavers, and carvers, and that sort of thing, but they never had a cohesive bonding together like they had under this administration. It was a very, very exciting time. It leads to artists going to Bloomindales, which they would, that just never happened before. It was exciting. It was exhilarating. Then the, the effort for the Japanese market came about and there...Takashimaya the largest department store in Tokyo. Their business men came here and saw us, and met with, us and talked and traveled around the state again. They selected the specific crafts that they wanted sold in their store. It just, it developed. It just grew like a mushroom. Since then, after that, after I left, I lost contact because I went into a whole other area...again, remaining in public

relations and creative services. But, I wasn't as involved in the crafts obviously, as I was then. So, I, but...I don't see...I didn't see the emphasis in the state put on the crafts arena as it was under the Brown administration.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, can you give me some idea of the years and the different positions you were in?

LOWE-MASUHR: Well, I started out as a Director of Creative Services in Public Information, and then when the Department of Arts was formed I became Deputy Commissioner with Lois, under Lois Mateus as Commissioner then.

WILLIHNGANZ: What year would that be?

LOWE-MASUHR: That would be in '81 when the Department of Arts became a reality. I moved from Public Information into that. Then in '82 when Lois left, then I became Commissioner at that time, and stayed until spring of 1984.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, and then where you working directly with Martha Layne Collins and with the different governors there?

LOWE-MASUHR: Not really, because I think it reflected that as new administrations come in, each one has a different emphasis, and the arts was a great emphasis under the Brown administration. Martha Layne was into in my opinion, more economic development in other areas. It just...it didn't...and in fact, the Department of Arts no longer existed after...not to long. I know when it was decommissioned. But, after that, there was one Commissioner after me. She was there for, I don't know, a couple years, and then the Department of Arts was no more. The Crafts Department moved into another. The Crafts Division moved into another department and became it's own. It had it own autonomous recognition then. And it expanded, I mean, there were numbers of people then added to staff and that sort of thing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about working with Lois Mateus, and what you did.

LOWE-MASUHR: It was great. It was...Lois is a very dynamic person and her brain cells or her wheels are spinning constantly. Anybody that knows Lois knows that. She was very close to Phyllis and she did a lot of traveling throughout the country at the time. Because again it wasn't just crafts we had a lot of other responsibilities in the department. I was a person that actually carried out some made sure that a lot of the decisions that were made were carried out. Then I did a lot of personnel work and that sort of thing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay when the emphasis came to go to New York. Phyllis George did, where you involved with that?

LOWE-MASUHR: To Bloomindales?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

LOWE-MASUHR: Yes. I wasn't Commissioner though, at that time. I was Deputy, so I was more involved again with the nitty gritty, making sure that certain things were done, and that expenses and details were taken care of.

WILLIHNGANZ: So how did all of that work?

LOWE-MASUHR: (Laughing) It worked wonderfully. We would meet...at that time the mansion wasn't complete, wasn't renovated, and that was another thing that developed while I was there. The renovation and restoration. So, of course, the Browns lived at Cave Hill Place, and it was not unusual at all to have very, very lengthy meetings at Cave Hill Place instead of, you know, in our offices. And that was exciting too. I mean it was all very exciting. Phyllis is...her energy and her enthusiasm is contagious. All the people around her had to maintain that kind of enthusiasm also. It was expected of you (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: Now did you?

LOWE-MASUHR: And "no" was not allowed. The word "no" was simply not allowed. There is always a way.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you get involved in formulating some of the marketing programs or initiatives?

LOWE-MASUHR: Yes. But again, through an administrative type process. Through meetings and deciding, you know, what's going to work best here, and making the arrangements that certain things are done in order for that to happen. Then, when I became Commissioner...then my role changed. It became more of a working with people on ideas and developing new programs. It was a whole different...I filled a different role as Commissioner after Lois left. I was more of a front person, to be honest, is that's what happens in that role. Speaking and meeting with groups, and going around to, whether it be civic groups in small towns, you know, because we really did...involved people from one end of the state to the other. We didn't just stay in Frankfort. I covered a lot of miles, and learned more about this state than I think most people ever have an opportunity to do. And it was wonderful.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, some of the initiatives that were launched in terms of the marketing in...particularly with the Bloomingdales, and with the Japanese connection.

LOWE-MASUHR: That came with directly, I would say, with Phyllis and her contacts in New York. With Marvin Traub, you know, and that's how so many things like that worked out. Another great effort too, then, was certainly at Derby time. Because, we would have all these guests come in...that well known guest from in the country, and out of the country, and it...there was always a great effort put to, you know, let them know, and let them be aware of great crafts and art we had here. And, a lot of gifts,

obviously, were always Kentucky crafts. The Kentucky Crafts Arts, Arts and Crafts Foundation, that Mary Shands was head of...she maintained a home in New York, and it was full; it was beautiful, it was full of all Kentucky objects...rugs and paintings and baskets and weavings and so forth. So it was always an effort to inform people, and let them know the quality of the work that we have, that we have here in this state.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, there's been some criticism in terms of the marketing taking over the craft in some ways.

LOWE-MASUHR: I think that's about...that is a balance you have to look at, because you can't let it become a mercenary kind of thing. You have to retain the quality, and so forth. But, I don't think...now, I don't know. I can't speak for these last recent years, but, I know that that was not the case when we started out, when we started the program. Because it gave these people...a lot of these people had individuals...Minni Yancey, Jack Johnson...he made wonderful boxes, and the weavers...they didn't look at their craft as, as something that was that valuable to other people. I think that is what we really come to see, that they had something here that had intrinsic value. On the other hand also was saleable, you know, and that they could make a living at it. There were a lot of people that came out of the movement that, - that did begin to make a living, instead of doing this just as a side thing from what their real job was. And, of course, Berea was always looked at. I mean, this was aside from...I mean, Berea was looked as a Mecca I think of Kentucky crafts. Rightfully so, but it was all concentrated there. I think that what we were able to do is to spread it around the state, and let everybody understand what they were capable of doing. Of course, Churchill Weavers have been respected for many, many, many generations. And the work was wonderful, and it was exciting to show what their products were, but there were many, many, many more, and I'm sure that Richard and Lila obviously feel the same way. They were as much as enthusiasm as we were at promoting crafts as an art, and as a financial satisfaction too.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, it seems like there is a balance that people strike, and they approached it from different angles when Richard took over the Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. His approach was to go out into the hills, and out into the rural areas, and discover unknown artists, and bring them in, whereas with Phyllis, the thing was to get major orders in, and sometimes those orders...I spoke with Walter Cornelison at Bybee Pottery, who said that flat-out, when they asked him to ship them massive amounts they decided they really couldn't do it, because it would have so changed their process. Do you see any conflict there?

LOWE-MASUHR: I can, yes. I can, because I can see where that could be a conflict. If you let it get out of hand. Just like the same thing with the man that I mentioned earlier, Tim Hall that made, that does the wonderful wildlife woodcarvings. You can...and that happened with the Japanese. They came and saw that product, and were so enthused about it. It's, it's just gorgeous, but when they wanted to put in an order the same thing you know, they (dog barking in background).

WILLIHNGANZ: Wait a second.

LOWE-MASUHR: (Laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: Don't guard us. (Laughing)

LOWE-MASUHR: They had to understand that these products couldn't be, just be churned out. That would have destroyed the whole effort, so I think that is a very difficult thing, and I think that that Fran Redmon who took over the Crafts Division, the Department I think she recognized that, too. Had to become very cautionary about that not happening. But, I think what you are referring to was the enthusiasm that, that existed in the beginning, and it needed that enthusiasm to get this off the ground. Then you tweak things as you go along. I think Richard's idea certainly was was right to maintain that quality. You can not...and Bybee obviously. To maintain that quality you can't do that. You can't just become... a wholesale company that is going to put out slack, you know, which we see now. And it's very irritating to me, in fact. When I go into a store and I see these different widgets, and they're presented as craft items. And you turn them over, and see you know they are not. Where they came from (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I wonder how you view, for instance, the Artisan Center in Hindman and Berea, and what the effect has been on local artists.

LOWE-MASUHR: Oh, I think, immeasurable. I really do. I think that for generations they will be seen as forerunners for maintaining. This is a valuable thing that, that...yes there are a few other states...North Carolina, for instance, that they certainly have wonderful craftsman. But this is a real gift that Kentucky has, to have this kind of talent. To not maintain it and encourage it and promote it, I think, is a great loss. Particularly now in today's time, where electronics and the whole techno world has taken over, to not maintain this would be a travesty, I think. I feel very strongly about it.

WILLIHNGANZ: You've seen a fair amount of ebb and flow in the support the craft world has received from the government and the economy in general. What factors do you think account for that change in support?

LOWE-MASUHR: I, one thing...the enthusiasm in having a disciple like we had...we were fortunate to have. People...their emphasis being put on other other areas. And I think it is very personal sometimes. It is a very personal aspect of whoever is the leader at that time, whether it be Governor Fletcher or Martha Layne Collins or whatever. I think that that's only natural, that each leader that some areas in...has certain things that they are very, very anxious to promote. It could be agriculture for some. I think right now with Governor Beshear, his hands are so full with just budgetary problems, that it's a little hard to see what's going to happen here right now. But, I think that's just a natural ebb and flow of how things...of what happens throughout the country. And what's in, you know. Like right now, we're all concerned with what should help the crafts marketing. We are so involved with green, you know, with going green. Obviously, artisans now, they're living, they are living that out. They

are going green. They are utilizing natural objects, and natural fibers, and whatever, to maintain their skills and their art. So, I don't, I don't know what is going to come from this administration, but I just think that it's a natural ebb and flow. The, the basic enthusiasm for Kentucky crafts though, are still viable...there is no doubt about that. Because, again, because of the quality, and to be...to have like a juried marketing show is very different than some of these other markets that you go to, where they're not juried, and I think that makes a big difference to maintain that quality. If it slips, then it will affect the overall...the whole program, I think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, tell me about what you think about that jurying process, in terms of preserving Kentucky's unique cultural heritage.

LOWE-MASUHR: Well, I think it has...the jurying process has to come from those...whoever the jurors are. That are from within the heritage themselves. I don't know that I'm sure that outsiders could be helpful. But basically, it has to be leaders...I mean recognized leaders that have produced themselves. That have authentic ability to judge and decide what quality is. I think so far that has, that has been maintained in my opinion. Because I go to markets every year. You know, that it doesn't become kitschy, that we can't do that. That's just can never happen.

WILLIHNGANZ: What's your feeling about the St. James Art Fair?

LOWE-MASUHR: Well, I love the fair. You know, and I go every year. But I think, I think that there's a case where, in my opinion, where you see some things that you wonder how they got juried in. That is, they're temporary kind of pieces. Not with a lasting kind of quality that you find in Kentucky crafts. I'm talking about little ornaments and jewelry kind of things that seem to be just very temporary and translucent in value. Where Kentucky crafts that...that we are...speak about, are things that are going to be in a family, and go on and for a life time, and be passed on to people. Certainly, the beautiful quilts that we have...quilt makers, ceramics, and woodcarvings. I've got rugs now, in fact, that I've been using for twenty-five years that have been woven here. So, I think that the lasting quality and the beauty is what what has to be uppermost. And, I think St. James has grown so big that it is overwhelming, and you just kind of pass through sometimes, and not really appreciating what's there. A lot of glass work that seems to be more hobbies like instead of art, craft, craft art.

WILLIHNGANZ: When you look at the programs that our state government has sponsored and tried to do outreach with, do you think there has been a significant impact on the rural economy of this state?

LOWE-MASUHR: Yes, I do. Now I don't have any figures. Since I haven't been involved with it, but I certainly had figures from when I was involved with it that documented that. Particularly through the crafts market, and what impact that that had. Which went back to the rural people that were involved in the market.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now were you involved in the formulations setting up the Kentucky Craft Market?

LOWE-MASUHR: Yes. Yes, I was, and I had mentioned to you when the crafts...the whole crafts project started, it was a very complicated...long meetings and vary specific, and not just emotional. We're going to do this because its nice and this is...these people need help, and so forth. It wasn't that. It was a very organized concentrated effort to have goals and motives, and so forth, that started it. It...we have pages of documentation to show that.

WILLIHNGANZ: In...you, I assume that you feel that it is still viable and still playing an important part in the state?

LOWE-MASUHR: Oh, I certainly do. Yes, I do. If...and you used a word that I think, that also is critical to it, and that's the history of it. When you see the connections to all the past generations, and how these items, these skills and these traditions in using their hands and producing these things. I think that is vital to a state, and I think we can ill afford to lose that sort of thing. Not all young people are going to be interested in it, but I think that there are sizable amounts of young people that it's important that we do this for them and their families and their children. I mean I have four children and two of mine are very, very interested in it, and the other two aren't. But it's important that there be those that are.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you define what craft is? I mean, I do video editing. Is that a craft?

LOWE-MASUHR: I would call that a technical craft (laughing). I look at, that's a hard thing to describe, but it's anything that is made, that involves your hands. Yes, you create. It's not copied. It's either inspired or its its comes about by accident. It could be that there are some things that could happen that away. In woodcarving, for instance, there are people that use natural...like in walking sticks for instance. They use wood that is in a natural form to make that. Or stools, or...but, its hand made, and the hand and brain work together to make something this beautiful. Whether it be usable. Sometimes...used to be people thought they had to be useable. I think now it encompasses just plain beauty. That in itself makes it important.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I look at the compromises that get made over economics, and you know Louisville Pottery walks a very thin line between mass production and individual creativity.

LOWE-MASUHR: Yes, yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, how do you draw that line is always a question I have.

LOWE-MASUHR: Well, I think the user and the buyer determines that. When they, when they begin to recognize that something is...that they are taking advantage of



you as the buyer, that this is not a piece that is that's its not put together well. Or, the design is...is...lacks interest to you, and it's not something that you want to live with. I think it has to be something; one of the important things about crafts is that you enjoy living with them. There's connection between you and that artist the same as with paintings or sculpture. But it is something that you want to live with. It becomes part of your surrounding that makes you feel good, and better when you look at it, or you touch it, or you love it. I think that you get that, you gain that from crafts. When you look at these large pottery places, some of the stuff, it's amazing how you can almost look at something's and you know right away that's not going to last. That doesn't have lasting quality. That's why Bybee Pottery is so wonderful. My house has Bybee pieces all over. Some of the pieces are not used for what they were originally designed to be, but each piece is different, and you want to pick it up, and when you do you enjoy handling it. It's not only handling it but it's pleasing to the eye. The consistency is there of pleasure that it brings to you.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's interesting. I was talking with Gwen Heffner about her work, and her sense of how it was taken in by the people who purchase it and hold it. Just enjoy it. I've always talked with, bluntly, with one lady who does embroidery. I said, "Well that is wonderful", and she said patterns...and she showed me some of her work, and all of this, and I said, "Well, you know, maybe you could tell me a little bit about how you do that." She said, "Well, I design it on a computer." She actually puts designs in through some kind of software program and makes the designs there. Then she can actually feed that into a machine which actually does the embroidery. Now.

LOWE-MASUHR: That's kind of going over the edge I think (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: She does use her hands...sort of.

LOWE-MASUHR: Well...and the concept is...its her concept that comes up with this image, so from that standpoint I think it has merit, but to me the wonderful thing about crafts...bona fide crafts, is that the hand creation. I would have, I have some question about that (laughing) I really do, I really do.

WILLIHNGANZ: I have talked with potters who have concerns about using molds.

LOWE-MASUHR: Yeah, oh I would too.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

LOWE-MASUHR: That's what's beautiful about Bybee you know. You just feel, you just feel it (laughing) it's an emotional thing I think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, the wonderful thing about...I went to Bybee's headquarters, which they've been in, and has been around for 150 years or whatever. Before I talked with Walter I walked through the place with my camera going, and took

shots of this lady who was just...sits back there...and we got right in front who does all this scallop things on these bowls, and puts handles on. It is just beautiful to watch.

LOWE-MASUHR: It is, it's wonderful.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's terrific work.

LOWE-MASUHR: I, we can't lose that, you know. I just feel very strongly about that. And the fact that out back of where you were there there's a limited amount of this clay that is going to be there forever. I mean we think it's going to be there forever. Well, it may not be you know (laughing). But, that whole transition, you know, from earth to the hand to the user, I think is phenomenal. I really do.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, what do you think of the future of craft working in this state? What do we need to do?

LOWE-MASUHR: We need to not let that lesson of what we just talked about, of the value of the creator, become overwhelmed by the whole technology that people live with today...of computers and Facebook and Twitter, and so forth. Which is certainly...it's made our life...it's added to our lives. But, we can not...I don't think we can afford to let this other aspect go. It's from a historical standpoint, and a psychological humanistic standpoint. There's that fine line you were talking about...mass production and the economy and so forth being over-weighted. It's the same thing I think with this. I think that, and it could be that, we are going to go back to that. Who knows, because of the economy situation we are in now could arouse in people the whole aspect of the human side of life, and that we can go back to doing things and enjoying things that we do ourselves. That we create. Hopefully, maybe some of that could come about. Not that the economy is a good thing. A poor economy is...we welcome that, but it also could have some positive things come about where families could do, could learn to do some things together and create. And children could learn to create things instead of just everything being, you know, more videos and more computer programs, and that sort of thing. I'm idealistic enough to hope that that would happen (laughing). I don't know.

WILLIHNGANZ: When you look at government supporting the arts, do you feel that there's any inherent conflict in terms of determining what those arts are, or is there any potential hazards?

LOWE-MASUHR: Well, liberal that I am (laughing), I would be concerned about government dictating too much to the artists, and I know that's a big...can be a big, big problem. To get into with people. It's difficult to determine taste for people; I don't think the government though can do that. They may offer some parameters, but I don't see how government can, unless again, it's something obscene or whatever. But, what's obscene in one person's mind may not be in another person's mind. So I think it, there really is a delicate balance between government and what is acceptable. I don't think that the art, arts can do without government though, because there's just not enough

money, and there's not enough financial support in the public arena to do what needs to be done in the way of programming and education. Encouraging people to go into various fields of the arts...whether it be writing, music, crafts, fine arts or whatever. But I think that it is a very delegate thing for government to begin to judge and dictate what's good.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, of course, not just for government. I mean if you looked at the Fund for the Arts.

LOWE-MASUHR: Oh, yes. I agree.

WILLIHNGANZ: Decisions they have to make in terms of performing arts verses physical arts, those are tough decisions to make.

LOWE-MASUHR: Yes, yes, yes. We experienced some of that when I was Commissioner. The man has passed away since, but with the Playhouse in Danville. Pioneer Playhouse? They were always working, they operated on a shoestring and they were always looking for a nickel. I mean, would help them and, of course, through grants that came through the Kentucky Arts Council at that time, and I'm sure it still does. The grant process that they used...how do you compare that, and make a judgment? I mean they had lights in coffee cans when it went down the aisles, you know (laughing). How do you balance that with Actors Theater? But in my mind that place had a great value. I mean it attracted tourists which affected the economy in a different way. But, what...you couldn't turn them down, you know. They still needed some help and support, because the quality of what they had in their plays was alright. The same thing in fact...what's happening now with the Kentucky Repertory Theater? What's going to happen if they lose? That, that has always been a forerunner for theater. What's going to happen if they lose their, you know, the major part of their funding from the state? Because there is just not enough dollars in those communities, per say, right around to keep that going...that would be a great harm...a loss for that theater to go out of existence.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you see a big difference in the support for the arts and craft work, particularly in Louisville, as opposed to Lexington, for instance?

LOWE-MASUHR: I think we're a little more...but, I might be wrong. I think we are a little more. We're broader in our support, than maybe, than Lexington is because they have fewer dollars to dispense. We just have so many more avenues to deal, to support. No. I really can't make a judgment on that other than just what I have personally...have observed. That it's a smaller fish pond up there than here. So, they have to be maybe, more discretionary in what they do with theirs. I don't know what their involvement is as far as schools, and supporting the arts in the schools. Like here, where we are very fortunate to, to have a lot of support with that. Then I think about two different things. The Blue Apple Players that started out...I remember the day they started, and their very first performances, and what a wonderful, wonderful asset that that has been for children here, and again with a combination of support of public and

private support. Same thing with Appalshop. I remember very well when they started out on just nothing, and it's a very viable wonderful, wonderful asset for this state. The whole, in my opinion, of what all Appalshop does. I'm sure they have done some things that maybe some people might say, "Well. I don't think we ought to be supporting that". But, that's...I don't think...that is a viable decision to make. I really don't.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about Appalshop. I don't think I'm familiar.

LOWE-MASUHR: It's in Whitesburg, Kentucky. They do film video and original things, and support artist's interns, and so forth, and have, just to me, done a fantastic job over the years. Of education and artistic work...and it's similar to the same kind of thing as Hindman with that, that passion...that and love that these people. Who knows? Maybe they could have gone to, maybe New York, or someplace else, and done things, but they choose to stay. You know, in their own Josephine, I can't think of her last name. To stay in their own area and take a chance on, you know, this is where we're going to stay and survive. The same thing with Grey...with the book binder in Monterey, Kentucky, that does all handmade books, you know, and the type is...some of it is handmade. Those are the people that I think deserve stars in their crown, as my mother would say. For casting their lot, you know, where they are planted, and choosing to stay there, and maybe not being having as much...as many lucrative jobs to do. But they, but they make it, and they only add to our...to quality of life here in this state.

WILLIHNGANZ: I was interviewing Mary Reed, who among other things is a corn husk artist. So she and her husband have a farm, and she takes these corn husks, and dyes them, and dries them, and shapes them, and cuts them, and forms them into brides, and Halloween decorations, and all sorts of things. She said a series of wonderful things, but one of the things she said was that when she was marketing this...selling to people. They always want to know the story behind the craft. This has an amazing long history. It actually goes back to the time of the pharaohs when they were designing dolls using corn husks.

LOWE-MASUHR: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: This is not new at all. This has been thousands of years. Its interesting and I think to myself what are the...what are the crafts that are particularly unique, or particularly well developed in the State of Kentucky, as opposed to other areas. Do we have particular crafts that are indicative to our culture?

LOWE-MASUHR: I would think that there are certain types of weaving...yes, with using natural products. Certainly hemp, you know, is one that was here centuries ago and used. Again, back to Bybee Pottery. I think that the clay that is indigenous to this area is one of them. I hadn't thought about that that much. You got me. The corn husk is certainly a good suggestion, because I know there is a place in Crestwood, Kentucky, now, that is making and selling corn husk products. See, you automatically think of tobacco and horses (laughing). And, I don't know of any art forms come from...

(laughing) come from those. The buckeye trees...I'm seeing a piece of wood over there that is used for certain utensils, I think...is a very important, not product, ingredient for certain wooden objects. Well, horse hair tails work (laughing) for bowls (laughing) and I don't know of any, I can't think now.

WILLIHNGANZ: I look at some of the things that I consider artworks...a lot of the broom making for instance, and things.

LOWE-MASUHR: Oh yeah, right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Some of these things were certainly brought here from other places, but you look at Shaker Village, and all that crafts that came out of that unique experience. I don't honestly know how many of those originated in New York, where they began, or how many of those basically were developed here.

LOWE-MASUHR: And, what they brought with them, pioneer. What they brought with them when they came from Europe.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's amazing, given that how long it's been since the Shakers were actually active, that so much of that culture is still with us, and there are still people who doing that extensively.

LOWE-MASUHR: Right. Well, when I think, you know, everybody it seems...different areas have their own unique art and things that should be preserved. I think of, like, Southern Indiana, as a certain compliment of Amish there, that are fascinating...and it's the same thing here in Kentucky. We have, when you think about it, we have music that is indigenous to Kentucky. The clays that we have and so forth. So, that's why I think its important for every area to identify the people that work with this, and to make it valuable to, and I just can't emphasize that enough. That, I think that its part of our history, and we have to keep it alive, I think. And appreciate, I think, is maybe the right word. In my opinion I revere the work that craftsman do, whether it be in Appalachia, or in Western Kentucky, or Louisville right here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you know why Berea in particular became a focal?

LOWE-MASUHR: The college. As far as I know, the college. Because it was a land-grant, I guess is what you would call it. Maybe it wasn't, but it was because of the students could produce and make things that were productive from a monetary standpoint. They've, they developed that skill that, I mean, that industry. Certainly, Richard Belando was involved into it as well as the Churchill Weavers. But, as far as I know, that's the primary reason was for the students...it was an education process from a practical standpoint to develop practical skills.

WILLIHNGANZ: As you look at what this group that I'm involved with...the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association is doing. Where do you think we

should set our priorities? What do you think we should try and accomplish? What's important to try and preserve in our culture and our state history?

LOWE-MASUHR: Well. I certainly think that the artisan's standpoint, that that is a very important thing, just as we almost from a documenting process...from like a library of identifying this progression, and of this history...the same as we would musicians or writers. To maintain that, that respect that the world have for the writers that we've had, and the music that we have, and the political people that we've had, that have come from Kentucky. I think that there is this whole area that is identifiable as a key part of our history, and that is what this organization needs to do. Not so much from an artistic standpoint, but from a documenting the historical growth of it. Not so much...not from a judgmental standpoint that this is good, this is better, this is whatever. This is what it is. This is what we had twenty years ago...fifty years ago, and to maintain that record, I think is what's important.

WILLIHNGANZ: How much did you think the whole craft movement in this state has been fueled by the individual personalities who have been involved, like the Homer Ledford's of this?

LOWE-MASUHR: Oh, a great deal, a great deal, yes. Because, that these people are like missionaries. They are the people that have developed the interest and the enthusiasm. Without that, you know, it's like a light under a bushel. It's not going to, it's not going to glow very much. Homer particularly, even since in the age, in this age of media, Homer was right there. You know, he was seen by so many people, by our state network, and so forth, as well as his commercial television, but primarily through the state. I think that's another...KET...no other state has a network like we do. Educational network. We were one of the...Louisville was one of the first five educational stations in the United States. Most people don't even know that. Then, after Louisville started with our stations, then KET, and Lynn Press and all of his people...Jenny Fox. That's, that growth started in Lexington. As far as I know we were the first. I might be wrong, but I think I'm correct that we were the first to have the entire state in the network, for education in the schools that were in the Appalachian area, and so forth. That is something that is truly to be grateful for. The programming that brings us the Homer Ledford's. The Bill Monroe's. The artists and craftsmen is phenomenal. It really is, and for that to not be fully supported by government, I think is, we can't let that happen (laughing). We can't.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Are there any other admonitions you would like to offer or?

LOWE-MASUHR: No. I mean. I just again...I can't say enough how important I think this is, and that from the beginning to...it's a...it's been a blessing and a joy for me that I can't, I could never repeat, you know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well. Thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it.

LOWE-MASUHR: Thank you.