

KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY AND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

Interview with Dobree Adams
Interviewer is Bob Gates
November 11, 2017

() This symbol refers to an inaudible word or phrase.

. . . This symbol refers to an interruption to the speaker

Gates:

Okay, this is Bob Gates and interviewing Dobree Adams at her home. And along the Kentucky river, where the heck would you call this? Uh, is this Bald... It's part of Bald Knob, right. But you're, you're off the knob.

Adams:

We're in a river bottom.

Gates:

Yes. Yeah. You could see the river from out here.

Adams:

Well, no, I was up in the hill and you come down, come down the road to get to closer to the river.

Gates:

Yeah. So we're going to interview you for KCHEA. And I'll have something for you to fill out at the end if that's okay. So where did ... you were born in Mississippi? I like to go into the beginning.

Adams:

I was born in Greenville, Mississippi, which is the heart of a Delta. Yeah. And when I was about four, we moved to Texas to Dangerville, which is outside Dallas because my father was too old for the draft for World War II. And he wanted to make a contribution. He had been in the National Guard. He had gone through the big flood in 1927 with the National Guard, but he wanted to do something more. So, he had an uncle in Dallas who helped him find a job. So my mother and I followed as soon as he had the job settled and we moved to Kentucky when I was seven years old.

Gates:

Where you Mississippi people?

Adams:

My parents were Mississippi people. Right.

Gates:

Okay. In the Delta area? I've been down there a couple times, but I'm trying to figure out where Greenville is.

Adams:

A hundred miles south of Memphis. And my father's sister and her husband had a big plantation. And then my mother's sister and her husband had a smaller plantation north of Greenville. So after we moved to Kentucky, I would often go down in the summers and run wild on the plantations ride a pony ride, a mule.

Gates:

Were they involved with the civil rights movement down there?

Adams:

Not at that time.

Gates:

But later on, I guess. So you moved to Texas. So he could do something with ...

Adams:

He was like plant manager at Lone Star Steel Company. And they were supposedly going to make stuff for the military, but I don't think they ever really got started before the war ended. That was my understanding.

Gates:

Well, how many siblings did you have?

Adams:

One brother, but he was not born until after we were settled in Lexington. He's 12 years younger than I am.

Gates:

Kind of grow up as a, the one for a while, 12 years. Anyway. Did that help you out? You think in the artwork or that have anything to do with anything?

Adams:

I don't think it had anything to do with anything.

Gates:

Your mom and dad, are they still alive?

Adams:

No. They both died in 1997. My mother was the architecture librarian at the University of Kentucky. And when she got ill and had to quit, the University gave her the highest honor for a staff member, which is a Sullivan Medallion. And they named the architecture collection and library for her. My father, came up, basically work for IRS.

Gates:

What's that? Oh, the internal revenue. Okay. All right.

Adams:

He was an examiner and he met many people who were in trouble and that he helped get out of trouble. And he didn't like the stigma of working for the internal revenue service. So he was happy when he left there and he became controller of a chain of Baynham shoe stores, big shoe

store company in Lexington. And he was there for quite a while. And then he ended up working for Kerry and Adam's construction company.

Gates:

What was he doing there?

Adams:

He was an accountant. He always bookkeeping. Running the office. Right. And, um, but the interesting thing is that a lot of those people left over from his working with IRS became his private clients on the site. So I grew up ...

Gates:

As a bookkeeper.

Adams:

Yeah. Well, as a tax person, he would do their taxes for them. So there was one who brought home cured bacon, sausage, another one who had very high quality antiques, a few of which we have in the family that came from his doing her taxes that particular year. It was just interesting.

Gates:

How did he help them out when he was at the IRS?

Adams:

Well, you know, he does, had to simplify things and figure out how they could pay what they owed and see if there were ways to look at it a different way. That's that was basically it ...

Gates:

So he wasn't one of these people that jump on you and try to get the money. Yeah.

Adams:

No, it was more, he was really helping, I think. Yeah.

Gates:

Well good. So he became though he did taxes for them later on. That's cool.

Adams:

Yeah, that's right. So taxes became a big thing for him to do and then I do ours.

Gates:

Oh, you learned from him?

Adams:

Yeah. But I have to take it somewhere else to get finished up because I don't want to bother with actually knowing the tax law and its changes. So, but I just know how to gather everything up together and make it beautiful for the tax man.

Gates:

That's good. Yeah. I just kinda throw it at her and say, what do I do? But no, I've been doing my own for a long time, but it's too complicated.

Adams:

I did my own up until I married Jonathan and we bought the farm and then it started becoming too complicated for me.

Gates:

He had his own business too. Right?

Adams:

Right. He is a writer and a publisher. So he had his own business. Then we had the farm and then I had my work for the state. And then later we added my being an artist to all of that. So I quickly got completely out of hand. So.

Gates:

So you went to Lexington. How'd you like living in Lexington?

Adams:

Well, I love the house we bought. Uh, when we first moved there, there was very little housing. So we rented a house in Mintel park in the winter because the people, elderly people went to Florida for the winter. So here was a little bungalow house full of overstuffed furniture and covered with sheets. And in the summertime we stayed at Transylvania Inn, which is now gone, which was a big Inn and boarding house next to Tattersall's Sales Barn at the red mile. And the wonderful thing about that was that we loved horses and we were already, we'd always been involved with horses. So there were some wonderful, uh, trainers who would come for the meet and they would stay there at the inn. So I got to meet Tom Berry, some other ones, uh, Gibson White and Ben White. His father had a barn at the track.

Adams:

And um, so I Marguerite Henry wrote a book Born to Trot about them, a children's book. And so I knew them. And then there was a Roy White, I think, no, no. Roy Miller was an older retired trainer who had an invalid wife and they lived there too. So, it was an interesting place to be. And my father made friends with the Kitroll's, I think it was, who had some hunter jumpers and they said we could ride, play with their horses. So, you know, I was little, I was, um, seven. And so daddy had me on a lunch line on this enormous hunter jumper. And I remember when that horse would take a step like this, I would go, you know, four feet up in the air just when he was walking because the horse was so big. So I was going around daddy and Clarence Kerr stopped and said, that horse is too big for that little girl.

Adams:

Here's the key to my pony barn. So he was one of the four funeral home, Kerr Brothers brothers. He was, and he found the funeral home business, somewhat depressing. So he had a stable of rental horses and ponies at the Red Mile. So we get the key to ride all of them. So we rode all of them until we bought the house on West Sixth Street. And then I would have one of

his horses or ponies at the house for two or three years. We had a barn, two acres on West Sixth Street right down from West Sixth Street Brewery.

Gates:

And that was a farm area then?

Adams:

No, it wasn't. They had raised horses there for years and years and years. Uh, it was probably a little bit bigger, but we had bought the farm from the wife or widow of Mr. Wallace who had raised a very good race horse there. So there was a little barn and a great big house.

Gates:

So you were at the Red Mile when you're riding these ponies, are you riding around the track? Yeah. Is that pretty fun?

Adams:

Oh yeah. That was fun. Yeah.

Gates:

Yeah. You kind of tried to race or anything or did you just play?

Adams:

I just rode. I broke an arm. Yeah. Yeah. I broke an arm. I was, I was riding a pony out in the inside the center field of the track. And we'd usually gone to the right, I guess when we came there and rode around that way, which would have been counter-clockwise for some reason that day I went the other way. And at some point the pony went that way and I went that way and I had a little cane whip and I fell on it, whip on, broke my left arm. And Mr. Kerr came out to keep me company while my father went to get the car, to take me to the hospital. And I remember saying, "Mr. Kerr, what's going to happen when you break your arm, do you die?" He reassured me that I was going to be all right. And actually Clarence Kerr took my mother and me to the lying estate of Man O' War when Man O' War died and Kerr Brothers had embalmed him. And he was in this big wooden casket that was, you know, half the size of my studio here.

Gates:

So was he standing up in it?

Adams:

No, he was lying down. He was lying. It was a big, it was a big flat box.

Gates:

Lying on one side, right?

Adams:

Yeah, that's right. And the lady in front of us patted him and Mr. Kerr said, "Oh, they did a really good job on him." And my mother totally freaked out. She did not want to go to the funeral. This was just too much for her, which is interesting. And I was just bug-eyed of course, at the whole thing. But, um, in that time period that we were staying in the little house in Mintel and in the, inn at Transylvania Inn, we did a lot of driving all over central Kentucky. So we do all the little roads. We knew all the horse farms. So we would go visit Man O' War and Will Harvard would bring him out for us to see him. We would go to Claiborne, um, in Paris and we would also go eat Sunday dinner. And, you know, there was, um, Old South Inn in Winchester. And then there was the Tavern in Paris, and then there was Beaumont in Harrodsburg. And, and so that was, that was kind of fun. So once we bought the house, a lot of that traveling around stopped, but what was wonderful is my father and I knew the pedigrees of all the major stallions, the thoroughbred industry in Kentucky, but that point, and he came to Kentucky, he had his choice of places to go for the Internal Revenue Service. And he chose Lexington because of the horses.

Gates:

Did you have horses on your farm and Mississippi, or ...

Adams:

He showed walking horses in Mississippi and he had a five gaited horse that jumped five feet when he was in Mississippi. When we were in Texas, he had a five that's usually not done. Uh, we had a five gaited mare when we were in Texas and the plant had a reservoir with a spillway. So there was a ramp down into the water. So daddy was able to stand up, have the horse go around him on the concrete and then swim the other way around with me on top. That was great fun. And then my mother had a horse too, and we would go do berry picking and Mulberry picking on horseback.

Gates:

How do you do that?

Adams:

We'd just ride, we ride, carry a bucket. Well, on the mulberries, we just reach up and get mulberries. But the dewberries, we would actually get off the horse and pick like you would pick blackberries.

Gates:

()

Adams:

This was Texas. Yeah.

Gates:

Wow.

Adams:

And my father and my mother courted riding horseback on the Mississippi levee. Yeah. So horses or one of the, one of the big things.

Gates:

So it wasn't pretty easy for him to be friends with all these people in Lexington, because he already had a strong interest.

Adams:

That's what he wanted to do. That's why he wanted to be here.

Gates:

And that's why I stayed at that place too, I guess. Yeah. That's interesting. So you stayed at an Inn for a couple of years? And then you got your house. So why were you doing so much traveling just to see the horses?

Adams:

Well, it was just, we were living in one big room in this Inn. So the three of us were claustrophobic. I mean, my father was working and, um, and I would go to school in the fall and the winter and, um, but basically they were energetic people who wanted to go see Kentucky, so, and they specifically wanted to see horses. So, and daddy ended up with thoroughbreds there on Sixth Street. Yeah. So sometimes we had as many as four little weanlings there.

Gates:

Did they race or?

Adams:

Um, he took some horses to the track, but they never raced, he never got into a race. He and I actually galloped, um, some at Keeneland, but mine had actually gotten hurt. So I was just walking around the outside while he was galloping, but we got to that.

Gates:

Okay. Did he keep his, uh, love of, uh, you said walkers?

Adams:

Tennessee walking horses. He never got over that. He actually gave Jonathan and me a Tennessee walking stallion when we got married and then we had to find a place to put him, so we bought him a farm. Yeah. So he was here. Yeah.

Gates:

Cool. Wow. So you went to high school in Lexington.

Adams:

I went to University High, which is the model school for the, uh, College of Education, which became defunct in 1965. It was supposed to be the latest and greatest ways of teaching. Oh, was I will disagree with that.

Gates:

Why what happened?

Adams:

Well, I just mean, I don't, I didn't see that it was the latest and greatest. It was kind of an interesting group of kids, some very smart and some not so smart. And, um, it was hard to be challenged, but I had a couple of friends that we competed. Competed. Yeah. For best in class. Yeah. Yeah.

Gates:

So, you did too?

Adams:

Yeah. Oh yeah. And then I went off to Wellesley when I graduated from high school.

Gates:

How was that? I mean, did you have any art in any of those classes that help make you think you might be an artist some day?

Adams:

Uh, I had a wonderful art teacher in high school. Well, I actually started in that school as a fourth grader, so I worked with her straight on through, but I never thought about being an artist. Um, I did start sewing when I was in high school and designing some of my own clothes and I took some of those to Wellesley with me. And then later, um, I made maternity clothes for myself with, you know, matching clothes for about a little girl who was, yeah. So there is a thread, a design thread that started, I think in high school, probably with that sewing and then just went straight through because I worked for Lawrence Livermore Laboratory after college. And I basically was not one of those coding girls, though that was the era. Instead I was, I had my own project and we shot it in Nevada. So I was a bomb builder, because that's what they were doing.

Gates:

Oh okay. Tell me more about it.

Adams:

Well, that's about all I can tell you. But the significant thing was ...

Gates:

No, I mean, but you assumed that I knew that and I don't, uh, what was that?

Adams:

Well, Lawrence Livermore Lab is, is like Oak Ridge and, uh, Sandia and Los Alamos. It was one of the big government laboratories for developing nuclear and atomic energy. And, when I went out there, um, well I went out first to be interviewed. I worked at Wellesley for the job placement

office. So it was the office for students to come and find out what they could do about finding a job after graduation. And that was right there. And I became very good friends with the head of that office. And at some point my senior year, she said, how would you like to work in California? And I said, sounds, sounds good to me. And she said, well, they, uh, interviewer for Livermore is coming to Boston, but he can't come on campus because it's not his scheduled time to come on campus to interview.

Adams:

However, we could arrange for you to meet him in Boston. I said, sure. So I went to Boston, you know, to meet this guy I'd never seen before, who took me out to, you know, a really big dinner. In retrospect, it's all of a sudden a crazy, but he and I became good friends. And then here came a letter, inviting me to come out for interviews. And what they had figured out was they had some girls who had come out from the east, who had turned out to be smart and they could learn on the job and they were successful. So they had their eye out for some others and they found that it was more economical to keep the physicists there at the lab and have the people being interviewed, come talk to them than it was to take them away from their work to go to Boston, you know, to interview somebody.

Adams:

So, um, when I went out there, which was spring break of senior year, uh, I got to go to all the different divisions in the laboratory and talk to people about the work. So there was one particular, um, division that I liked, which was peaceful uses of nuclear energy. There were others, but you know, you know how it is, there's never enough money for, for places like that. So, um, when I actually went out there in the summer to take my job, I got to do the same thing I used to, I used to get to go around and talk to people, except I was only talking to people where there was an opening. So I ended up with an amazing boss who was able to treat me like one of the guys. I was the only girl except for the secretary and each guy or a couple of guys had their own project.

Adams:

So I got my own project and it was only 20 years later that that guy, my boss said, how did you feel about the anti-feminist pressure? I said, you felt it all, you kept me busy. And I never thought about it except for one time. And I had to give a talk in front of all these PhD physicists about my project. And I had no credentials at all. I hadn't even taken physics in high school. So all I had done was learned on the job and I gave my talk about my project and some of what we were doing with that project was brand new and nobody knew anything about it. So at the end of my talk, two guys got up, took the floor, started ranting and raving back and forth. And I felt in my innocence that I had lost control of my audience. So I was mortified. So I kind of went back to the office and sat in my corner. And the guys in the office came in and said, what's wrong with you? And I said, you know, I didn't like the way that ended with those guys. And they just laughed their heads off. He said, those guys do that to everybody get over it.

Adams:

So, so that was wonderfully encouraging to me. It was great. You know.

Gates:

Were you a technician assistant or, I mean, what was your job?

Adams:

They called me a junior physicist.

Gates:

Junior physicist, but you didn't take any physics?

Adams:

No. I decided I should take a physics class and it was taught there in Livermore rather than a Berkeley. And there was a big Hungarian PhD physicist who was teaching this class and it was advanced mechanics. And when I came back to the office with the book, again, the guys in the office came in and said, Hey, this is tough stuff. If you have any trouble, let us know. And I really think that the Hungarian physicist would have liked to have washed me out, but he did not succeed. I did not make A's. I assure you.

Gates:

Did he know where you were working?

Adams:

I'm sure. He was just upstairs from where I was working. He knew what I was working, you know? Yeah. Yeah. It was just one of those things. So...

Gates:

What was your major in?

Adams:

Math.

Gates: Okay. So that you're in the field, but you're. Yeah. Okay. But, uh, it wasn't like you were a humanities, because you were smart.

Adams:

It just worked.

Gates:

Well, cool. So how long were you there?

Adams:

Well, not long enough. I got there in August of 1960 and then in January of 63, I moved to Oregon. I got married, had a child, who when we left was like three months old. Oh yeah. So I just had to kind of finish up things at the lab. Later, I ended up working for the lab again, but my cue clearance hadn't come in yet. So I was working outside the gate doing administrative programming, which was kind of boring, but it was a good job.

Gates:

So you got married to somebody from there or?

Adams:

No. Somebody I met in California. Yeah. And then we moved to Ashland, Oregon, and I taught math at Southern Oregon College now Southern Oregon University. And then we moved to Seattle and I work for Boeing. First in flight test as a data engineer, writing specifications for computer programs that would deal with the data that we're capturing about airplane performance. And so a lot of the stuff about the 737 Max and its FAA certification, you know, strikes some notes about having been there. And then at that time, Boeing had engineers in one place and systems analysts sort of there, and then programming the actual programming of computer programs, coding was in a different area. And so I had started to learn how to program. And when I had gotten bored, basically at flight tests, writing specifications for computer programmers, I jumped the fence and I ended up jumping into programming at a branch manager level. Because, I could communicate with the engineers.

Gates:

What kind of computers are we talking about? Is that the kind where you put the cards in?

Adams:

Well, we moved a little bit farther ahead. Livermore has always been right on the forefront and then Boeing also was pretty much on the forefront. So, you know, still I can remember, I was trying to remember with Jonathan, when was the first time I actually had some kind of little station attached to a mainframe and I think that was at Boeing, but it could have been at Livermore at the last there when I was doing that cobalt programming. So then after Seattle, we moved back to the Bay Area and from the Bay Area, we went to Southern California. So I was on the west coast for 12 years. And at the last part I was teaching horseback riding and then got a job at the University of California at Irvine, programming. And I was working with a physicist who was drawing pictures on a () how to teach physics using a computer. I mean, it was pioneering work. It was really interesting, but he didn't have the promotional PR and money associated with that same kind of program that they did in Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. So there was, uh, you know, everybody knew about that program and nobody knew about this much about this guy out at UC Irvine, but he was doing the same thing

Gates:

IBM or something, or?

Adams:

I don't remember that.

Gates:

Oh, okay. I don't know. What's a reference to Champaign Alabama? I mean, in Illinois,

Adams:

He was... they were doing the same thing. They were drawing pictures on the computer, on the () to teach physics. I mean the whole same thing was happening at two different places. One has more money and more name. And the other one is sitting over here doing the same kind of work

Gates:

You're going from job to job ...

Adams:

Because my husband was losing jobs and we would move and he would get another job or he would get, lose a job and get another job. And I would go along and get a better job. So, that didn't work finally in the end.

Gates:

You had a daughter ...

Adams:

I have a daughter and a son.

Gates:

And you're raising them the same time.

Adams:

Yeah. So we came home to Kentucky in 1973...

Gates: Was that after a divorce?

Adams:

The kids and me. Not divorced yet. But Jonathan Green was living two doors down from my folks and a mutual friend of ours, Carolyn Hummer. And it was my mother's best friend told Jonathan he should go check me out. And he knew my parents. And so he walked into the kitchen and a couple of weeks after I got back from California and we've been married now for 45 years, I guess.

Gates:

Working with numbers... It seems like you liked a lot, right. Working in computers ...

Adams:

Boring. Yeah. It's only, it's only the puzzle part. That's really interesting. Well, just using numbers, figuring out dates. I think that was a part enjoyed.

Gates:

And that's programming basically?

Adams:

Programming. Yeah. All of that. Yeah. But I did a bunch of designing when I was designing those specifications, that flight test, and there was designing associated with the bomb building at Livermore. And along the way I was sewing. I was sewing and I was gardening. Yeah. So I think that's the thread.

Gates:

Artistic things you're doing that makes you feel good. Sounds like you kind of had a rough marriage out there. Did you kind of retreat to some of that?

Adams:

It worked, it worked. He recently died and it was nice to reflect that the kids and I got to do a lot of things because of how much we moved on the west coast. We camped out a lot in the Puget Sound, ate oysters off the rocks. And we fished in lakes above Ashland, Oregon. I worked with the Ashland Shakespeare Festival.

Gates:

Where are you out there during the sixties and all that movement?

Adams:

Oh, I left before that happened. Yeah. That, that whole communal scene in Jacksonville and so forth and Ashland actually turned out to be kind of a hippie metropolis and lots of crafts and things. That was after I left.

Gates:

Right. But you went back to San Francisco that wasn't a summer of love or anything like that?

Adams:

I was busy being pretty straight and taking care of my kids. And so none of that really affected me one way or the other. I do remember being in Seattle, near the university, we were going to meet Tom Clarke and his wife, Beth.

Gates:

Historian, Tom Clarke.

Adams:

His daughter, Elizabeth and I were in school together. And so I was practically part of their family. So when he was teaching at Harvard, I got to go up and spend three weeks with him. And they're the ones who showed me the campus for Wellesley. So, but Tom and Beth were there, he was teaching at the university that summer. And in order to walk to where they were living, the street was just crowded with people. And the smell of marijuana was like, you know, and I didn't even know what it was, but I know that I felt uneasy in a crowd that smelled like that. If it had been horsemen, you were, I'd probably been perfectly happy. Yeah.

Gates:

So Tom Clarke was out in California for a while.

Adams:

Well. No, that was just Seattle for summer.

Gates:

For summer.

Adams:

Yeah. Maybe even a month just (). Probably.

Gates:

I didn't get to meet Tom till way later when he was very old.

Adams:

We stayed in touch. And so Jonathan and I would go to them and Jonathan knew him on campus because Jonathan thought worked for University Press. And, uh, so when we would go to the parties before the book fair and we would see him. Yeah. And I would always have a nice conversation with him.

Gates:

So you got back and you stayed with your mom and dad for a while?

Adams:

Yeah.

Gates: Was that okay?

Adams: It worked. We all survived it somehow.

Gates:

Did they have the same house at the time or did they ... ?

Adams:

The big house on west sixth street? Right. And Jonathan was two doors down the, down the block, but my mother by then was the architecture librarian. And she was very active in the north side association of Lexington, trying to bring up and preserve that older section of town. So she was always trying to get incoming faculty to find a house or rent an apartment in the older section of Lexington and the north side. So when it became time to get us out of the house, she found us an apartment on Hampton court.

Gates:

Okay. That was before you got married or?

Adams:

No. That was after we got married. Yeah.

Gates:

So you've lived in Lexington for ...

Adams:

Just a couple of years.

Gates:

What are you doing for a living then?

Adams:

Oh, he's working for UK. I worked for a while at architecture for Michael Kennedy who had a small computer and he was trying to get the faculty of the architecture school into using the computer. And of course I had come from working with Alfred Bork, University of California, Irvine. So I had all this stuff about how you could get people to relate to computers. We couldn't get anybody interested at all. And we, I did help teach one class that was trying to do that with the students, but it was like an elective. So, you know, they would be very enthusiastic for a while. And then they were buried in their other work and they would disappear.

Gates:

So it's like CAD or something like that or what, I don't know ...

Adams:

I don't know what that is.

Gates:

Is that when you use a computer to draw and make architecture ...

Adams:

Yeah. But all of that did not exist in 1973.

Gates:

But, what I'm trying to get at is that what he was trying to get going?

Adams:

Well. Yeah, it was, it was just trying, well, what I wanted to do is just list... build dialogues on the computer, where you could talk about architecture or they could do things like drawing something or planning something. I mean, remember at that time, all of the university had, was a mainframe computer and punch cards.

Gates:

What year is this?

Adams:

'73, '74. And so I was deeply disappointed that there wasn't more technology there, more sophisticated equipment because after all I had been using the latest and greatest ever since college. Sure. So, but we... and in the small Xerox machine that Michael Kennedy had in architecture use paper tape and paper tape absolutely hated me. So when I got close to the paper tape computer, it would eat it every time. So then I ended up working for dentistry for a while.

Gates:

Dentistry? How did you get into that?

Adams:

Well, they had computers, scheduling students. It was just, I'll be just a programmer. And then I worked for the jockey club that registered thoroughbred horses for a while. And now that whole cataloging for horse sales is automated, but I was on the forefront of thinking about how to do that. And that's what I was doing there for a while. And then I went to work for state government in Frankfort. So we bought the farm in '75 and in '77 we moved here, but I started to work first. It was the weather; it was so bad. We couldn't, we were going to live here. So we couldn't do that in the studio. Uh, we couldn't do that until March. And we had sublet our apartment in Frankfort to Gurney Norman, who was coming to UK to teach for the first time, I guess. And so we had to go back to living with my folks again for a couple of months before we moved down here.

But then in February of that year, which was '77, I started work for the division of water quality in Frankfort. Okay. And the very interesting thing is that we had brought that walking horse down here to the farm after we bought the farm, uh, I guess about the time that we thought that forecasts that we were gonna be moving here. So he brought him down, I guess, in the fall of 76. And so we would come down from Lexington and we'd feed him a couple of bales of hay, you know, when it was really bad weather, how he didn't found(er), get sick, I don't know, but he was a tough guy. And so we were coming down to do that. And I was in jeans and rubber boots to my knees because there was snow in the ground. And I called up the director of water quality. And I had given him my resume before, but I hadn't met them or interviewed them. And he said, when can you come talk to us? And I said, I can come right now. And he said, okay. So I thought I was just going to go talk to him. I got there. He had assembled all of his branch managers. Here I am in my jeans and rubber boots to my knees. Right. And I'm interviewing for a job. Well, it turned out to be a good job. Uh, but the one who was to end up to be my immediate boss, Shelby Jett. Shelby whispered after this conversation with all these branch managers and the boss, which programming languages do you know? Like that subject cannot even come up. But, but it was, it was fine. It was a good job. And then when John Y. Brown came in as governor and Jackie Swigart took over natural resources, I got to go to natural resources and be head of data process. And before that, I had been picked up by Bob Stone. So I worked in what it was, I don't know what they called it. Now. They keep changing the name, but worked for DIS and then went to Jackie Swigart's in natural resources and ...

(Inaudible chatter)

Adams:

And so then, I was there when, when John Y. Brown took all the programmers and analysts and throw them into one department. And I became a director, the only girl, a director in that department. And Mr. Fisher thought that I was a weak link, wet behind the ears. And, occasionally my boss who was very brilliant, but kind of crazy. He took a lot of guff for that, I think. And, and I remember having a conversation with Mr. Fisher about some work that I was doing, which was his idea, which was putting in strategic planning for the agencies for computers. And I thought we had had a really nice conversation, maybe the most business-like conversation, professional that had ever had with him. And when he signed off, he called me honey and I kicked cupboards. I was throwing fits. My secretary was wanting to know what on earth was wrong with me.

But it turned out that I had skills that the other division directors did not have. So I ended up, you know, I ended up putting in a program to pull systems analysts out of the agencies because they knew what was going on in the agencies and we can bring them in and get them into a track for being in computers, which was a good promotion for them. I ended up at one point putting in, um, the first office automation system in a state government. Uh, I ended up being in charge of microcomputers at one point when they first came in. So I did a lot of stuff. A lot of stuff while I was there, I was there for 11 years and I was our rep to the National Association of State Information Systems. So I got to go to meetings with people who did like-minded stuff in other states.

And then... this is maybe where we take a little break. Then I walked out of a good career in state government without a pension. Because at that point I was ready to raise sheep and be an artist and a Weaver.

Gates:

What made you think about doing that? What led you to that part?

Adams:

Well, uh, after we bought the farm... We moved down here in '77 and '83, I got my first sheep. I got about six sheep and I started learning how to spin, I guess when we were still in Lexington. And I had started weaving while we were in Lexington. I had gone to Berea for a month to study with Esther (). And then I took a class with Arturo Sandoval at UK, and then we moved here. And so it's so slowly, you know, I started raising sheep, spinning, weaving, and it became clear to me that this was really something I wanted to do.

And so then I went to Penland School of Craft and studied, spinning and dying in 1986. And then I went back in 1987 for a weaving class. But I went to Penland in that first year in '86, and all the students for that summer session were gathered there and I just knew it was right. You know, there was something that totally clicked. And yet when I was driving there, I was wondering if I was crazy. And of course, people in state government thought I was crazy.

Gates: Oh, did they?

Adams: Yeah.

Gates: What did they say?

Adams: Well, my boss just didn't believe I was going to quit. I mean, nobody quits without a pension. I mean, it was really dumb in lots of ways, but I was close enough to the top being a director that I got bounced around every time there was a new governor, I had to go justify my position, what I was doing, because I had this funny little division that did funny stuff that wasn't like anything anybody else did. And I felt like I was going to be in my grave if I kept on like this, that if I was going to get out and I had to come back, I had to go while my flags were flying and I

really wanted a different career. I wanted a real career as an artist and a farmer. So 1988, that's what it did.

Gates:

You made the decision. How close were you to a pension?

Adams:

Was like six years. And of course at that point, 6 years sounded like an eternity. Yeah. But it wouldn't have been, it would have been smart to have stayed, so, oh, well, I didn't count on the economy having a big bust... 2008. So.

Gates:

Was any of this influenced by the Craft Market and anything like that? The Crafts program that was starting up?

Adams:

Well ...No. No, not really.

Gates:

I mean, I've heard about that in state government or anything. I don't know.

Adams:

Well, I thought it at times about taking a job in the Arts Council or something like that, I actually talked to Nash Cox at one point and she laughed at me. Like, what would you do here? You know, I had a whole skill set that had nothing to do with art really at that point. So, and I decided that I shouldn't do this. I really shouldn't try and jump ship because I had good credentials and DIS and they were very forgiving. If I had a mare that was having a foal, or our sheep were in trouble or something, you know, I could just go home and take care of it. And I figured that I would have to prove myself if I switched. And maybe that was really stupid.

Gates:

So had you had any exhibits yet?

Adams:

No. The first, first exhibit was, wow. The first real exhibit was 1989. So it was after I left.

Gates:

Yeah. So you're really kind of making a big choice there. Yeah. Yeah. That sounds pretty scary.

Adams:

Yeah.

Gates:

Financially and yeah...

Adams:

But Jonathan was okay with it, you know, it was like, yeah.

Gates:

What was John Jonathan pulling some money, right?

Adams:

Yeah. Well, Johnson was publishing a new and he was booked designing for other people. Okay. Yeah. So he was making a living. Yeah.

Gates:

No, that sounds like a big decision there.

Adams:

It was a big decision.

Gates:

Yeah. But Penland... that's pretty big.

Adams:

Penland was really important because it was the first time you see, I still was working for DIS. And so I took two weeks off to go take a class two years straight. And so that was a big decision right there. And Penland is wonderful because, uh, the studios are open 24/7. Uh, the food is wonderful. The ambience, the setting is gorgeous. Um, and it was a wonderful place to grow. So I learned more in two weeks there than I would have learned, you know, in a class that met once a week. So by the time, by the time I left state government, I had a good skillset.

Gates:

Well, what made you want to raise sheep in the first place?

Adams:

Well, I had had a lamb in west Texas, so there was something there. I love animals, already had a horse or more than one horse. I wanted to raise my own wool. I was spinning. So I started off ... I didn't start off with the right breed of sheep for the best wool, but eventually I ended up with a flock of pure bred, registered Lincoln Longwools, which is an old British breed. And ancestors have a number of the commercial breeds today. And I ended up, uh, showing sheep in 1988 in Maryland at the largest sheep show in the country right after I quit state government. I mean, this is, you know, a plunge in head over heels.

Gates:

Well, how do you prepare to show lambs? Sheep? I mean.

Adams:

Well, I was already raising sheep, so I had some really nice young ones to show up there. So you have to trim them up. You have to get them in the show ring. You have to show them.

Gates:

I've never seen a lamp being shown.

Adams:

It's a whole skillset. And the other thing was that raising sheep, I didn't have any, anybody telling me or showing me how to raise sheep. I had a good book. And then, there were people around who had sheep. So, you know, we met and we talked about it and so forth, but I just had to learn how to raise sheep. Yeah. But I went on to not only showing it Maryland and having a champion Ram, but also setting up classes that my sheep could show in at the state fair and at the North American.

Gates:

Can you tell me how you show a lamb ... show a sheep? What are you doing? You're putting them out there and what are they supposed to show? Did they do anything? They just stand there?

Adams:

First a sheep has to show its confirmation that it's their standards for standing up straight and so forth. So confirmation comes first and often the judges are more knowledgeable about meat sheep than they are about wool sheep. So they're going to judge first on the confirmation they know, which is what every sheep should have. And then they're going to judge on the quality of the wall after that. Okay. So you have to choose the right sheep to take to the show.

Gates:

By knowing the judge's orientation, a little bit.

Adams:

Yeah. But it's, but you know, it's going to be the same. You've got to do your homework before you go there. So yeah.

Gates:

And you won the first time he showed? I thought that's what you said.

Adams:

No, no, no. I said I eventually had a champion Ram, but I showed for, I mean, I had sheep for 20 years. Registered Lincolns for probably 12.

Gates:

And then you had to shear them yourself?

Adams:

I learned how to shear them. It's a big art. And you have to shear about a thousand sheep before you're any good, really. So you learn how to shear. So then in an emergency you can do something, but you hire somebody for like \$2 a head to shear them once a year or twice. For me, it was twice a year because they were producing so much wool.

Gates:

So you hired somebody to come in and do it. How do they know how to do it? They're professionals. All right.

Adams:

They usually have sheep themselves and they're professional shearers. Yeah. And some local people. I tried some people from, oh, I don't know where they were from New Zealand or something who were traveling. And they were too fast. It was too crazy because I had to take, and I would have a friend helping me. I would have to take the fleece that was just sheared from the sheep. Take off inferior things, put it into a bag with a note, with the name of the sheep while he's doing the next one. And I also had to catch for him. Okay. So, you know, I had this person who was supposed to do the skirting of the wool and putting it into the sack, but I would have to kind of help her, have to help him, have to go get the next sheep, have to put the sheep back in a pen.

Gates:

I never would have thought it was be a problem to go too fast.

Adams:

Yeah, but going too fast was the, the wool didn't get in the sack properly and it didn't get skirted properly. So you just had a jumbled mess that you had to go through later.

Gates:

So you found somebody that you could rely on and work with them. So, uh, you like sheep, you like working with them.

Adams:

I love my breed of sheep. People complain about sheep that this or that dumb, you know, that kind of thing. These sheep were wonderful. Their personalities were great. They were smart. I learned how to halter break my sheep. Like you would halter break a horse so that I could lead them around instead of having to push them and shove him to, it was insane to see somebody with a big reputation as a sheep breeder and a showman who was pushing and shoving his sheep into the ring. And mine could just try it on a halter.

Gates:

Did you invent that? Or other people did that?

Adams:

Some other people did it too, but I always laughed at people and said, you know, you really ought to do this. It's worthwhile, but I, but I could jump my sheep off the truck myself and take them to the pen myself without any help.

Gates:

You just have to halter one and all the other ones follow, or you had to ...

Adams:

No. I would do them one at a time or two at a time or something.

Gates:

Yeah. You know, I like to get stories. And so that, that takes time. And so maybe we might have to come back and do some of this, but we were at the point where you were raising sheep, but you're seeing yourself as an artist. And you're starting to do shows. You want to talk about what your first show was and ...

Adams:

Yes, yes. So I left state government in '88. And the main thing is that I didn't have enough time to build a body of work until I left state government. I had been weaving, I'd been studying, I'd been taking workshops. I had been participating in some small shows, but I had no body of work for like a solo show.

Gates:

And you, at this point, you felt like you wanted to share something with people.

Adams:

Well, right. And that's why you do it is you want to share. So in 1989 at Liberty National Bank in Louisville, which had a gallery, which Jackie Parsley was running, there was a show, an invitational show of large work. And so I wove a piece for that show and it was based on an illustration in a book about Japanese gardens. So it was a painting of either a painting or a photograph of a koi pond, a lily pond with fish. And so this weaving had my interpretation of lily pond and the end woven in the bottom was an orange fish. So it was sold at the reception. And of course I thought I was hot stuff, but that happens very, very rarely.

Gates:

You started thinking of yourself as an artist you're looking forward to doing ...

Adams:

So in 1989, which was a year after I left state government, there was an invitational show at Liberty National Bank gallery in Louisville, that gallery was run by Jackie Parsley. And the invitation was for large, large works. I don't know if it was large woven works, but it was definitely large works. So I wove a large piece that was based on a photograph, I guess, of a lily pond in the inner city of Tokyo. With lilies and goldfish koi, there was a fish, orange fish woven into the bottom of this tapestry. So I sold this tapestry at the reception, which is like, it hardly ever happens that that happens. I thought I was pretty hot stuff. Well, the people were really nice and we took care of all the business, part of their buying it. And then the last thing he says is what it would be if we make it horizontal.

So I took a deep breath and said, well, you know, there's this fish woven into the bottom of it. I think it has to be vertical. It was for his office. But I thought afterwards, you just take your money and you'd go to the bank. You just don't get involved with that kind of thing. So the next thing that happened was an invitation to do a two-person show with Jennifer Heller Zurich. I've heard baskets and my tapestries at the Kentucky Arts and Crafts Foundation gallery in Louisville. And that was like two years late or late 1991. So I did a series of 12 tapestries one for each month of the year, based on the names of the moons in black elk speaks. And the names are things like

the moon, when the calves shed their hair, the moon of red cherries, the moon of falling leaves. So I had never done a whole series.

I, with my left brain, I design a very carefully so that there were different colors of wool for the seasons of the natural wool. And then there were transitions from one month to the next. So if snow was coming, there might be a little bit of snow for November and then a lot of snow in December. And I figured that I couldn't just go January to December because I was going to change what I was doing by the time I got to December. So I started skipping around well, anyway, it was a wonderful show. And with the leftovers, from the yarns that I had died for the individual months, I had enough to make a big tapestry for the entire year, which was nice too.

Gates:

And you make it on this?

Adams:

Yes. And, and the first loom I had was built in Putney, Vermont, and I bought it second hand. I bought another couple of looms. I couldn't make work first, but I bought that one. And that was my loom for, until after I left state government. And then I had this loom made for me out in Washington state.

Gates:

Made for you?

Adams:

Yeah. Right. The wood from that loom was cut by the Amish in Michigan and the, the bench, which goes back and forth is made from Kentucky coffee tree wood from this farm. But he knew nothing about Kentucky coffee tree wood, which is similar to Ash and he was afraid it wouldn't be strong enough. So he just made the bench instead of the whole loom out of it. So then I had a number of small shows and about that time or a little before my father started having some heart troubles and I started seeing the future ahead of losing my parents. And I started reading haiku, Japanese haiku about death and dying Japanese death poems. And I started reading various translations of the Tibetan book of the dead, and I talked to Nancy Wolsk, who is at that point, running Morlan gallery and Transylvania about having a show after my parents died and Transylvania was in their neighborhood.

Adams:

So it was an appropriate place for it. And she said, yes. And I said, well, you know, it's going to be a couple of years after they die before we're ready. But I had that show in 2001. And there were quotes in there about groundlessness from Gretel Ehrlich, and there were quotes in there from the Tibetan Book of the Dead or the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying. It's interesting that we install that show the day after 9/11 and a Japanese girl was visiting us at the time. And she had just come from New York and she had taken pictures of the twin towers. And, but they were processed after she got here. So we were able to put one on the door of the gallery. And because of that, what I had been reading about, I just wanted to share that show with everybody because that groundlessness was what everybody was feeling at the time. So that was quite an interesting, great big show for me.

Gates:

How do you interpret the date, the Book of the Dead and your tapestry?

Adams:

I just ...somehow I had a vision of how to weave something that I thought represented a certain kind of idea coming from the Tibetan Book at the Dead. So right now there are two large tapestries downtown Frankfort in Visit Frankfort that are from that series. One that actually showed in that show. And one that was shown like a year later that was woven a year later. One is the Bardo of Meditation and the other one is the Inner Resolution. So the Tibetans say that the first thing that happens is your body goes to pieces and it's gone. And the second thing that happens is that everything else goes, and the very last thing is when the last drop from your father meets the last drop of blood from your mother at heart center, it's all black and it's all over.

And Bardo means simplistically, the space between death and rebirth, but also in Tibetan Buddhists, it means all of these peaks and valleys of life. So you've experienced indecision, decision, certainty, uncertainty, you know, that horrible feeling when you're sitting there waiting for something to happen, you don't know which way it's going to go. Well, that's that groundlessness, but it's also that bardo. If I know, and I don't know. So all of this made a lot of sense to me as a person with what I was going through with losing my parents and my life ahead.

Gates: Did that feel good to have that exhibit up?

Adams:

Oh, absolutely. It was wonderful. Yeah. And again, you know, we talked earlier about the sharing is the most important thing an artist does, what they do in order to share what they're doing. It's very important. I started giving talks about my weaving and when I sold that tapestry at Liberty Bank gallery, the next day I went to the camera store and I made a conscious decision to buy the best point and shoot camera that I could, and not go to UK and take photography with Guy Mendez.

I just wanted to weave, I didn't really want to do that. And I only thought about photography as a tool, but I wanted to show people what I was seeing. I had learned about dying. I had learned about looking at colors when I was at Penland with Michele Whiplinger. And so I just needed to share that. So I would give a talk about my tapestries and then I would show what was behind them with photographs of, you know, a garden that had blues and greens lots of colors of blues and greens and the vegetables growing in the garden, that type of thing. And people sometimes would come up and say, oh, by the way, I really like your photography. And I would say what, you know, I wouldn't think of photography as a medium for me. It was just a tool, but gradually it became more important.

And eventually, I started showing my photographs with my tapestries, but I couldn't separate it. In the meantime, I had met all of these women who had come to Kentucky from Japan because they were wives of executives coming to set up the Toyota plant in Georgetown.

Gates:

How did you meet them?

Adams:

Well, there were some people who decided we should befriend them, and we should have a little club of Japanese and American women. And I really think that underlying, it was a thought that maybe we could talk to Japanese women about deep dark women's secrets, but Japanese ladies only really wanted to go shopping and see Kentucky. So I ended up having that, but only on a personal level, but, but they would go back after five years. And so I ended up with friends all over Japan and some of those arranged for me to have a show in Tokyo and some more of them arranged for me at the same time to have a show later in Osaka.

And that was 1993. And I went over myself for five weeks. And then in 1998 Jonathan went with me, we went back and I had another show and I was okay, but, you know, studying Japanese culture and aesthetics was really important. So I have had exhibitions since then, based upon that, you know, just what I saw, what I felt, what I studied, I guess. And my first husband's father was in WWII and stayed with the rehabilitation of the country in Japan and ended up his second wife was Japanese. So I already had this Japanese connection before and saw them actually when I was in Japan both times.

Adams:

So now we have photography and we have weaving and we have Jonathan's poems. And so in 2009, we had our first collaborative show of my tapestries, my photographs intertwined with his poems in Missouri, at the Albrecht Kemper Museum in St. Joseph, Missouri. And we started then a series of broad sides with my photographs, one of my photographs and a poem of his. And we ended up with a collection of 20 of those developed over the next so many years. So only four of them were there in St. Joseph, Missouri. So after that collaborative show, we had a couple smaller ones in Kentucky. And then in 2011, we had a big one at the Headley Whitney Museum. And then the last one we had was in 2015 at the Evansville Museum of Art in Evansville, Indiana.

So we now have photographs on the wall with a weaving, but there's no solo show of photography yet. So in 2013, David McGuire and Karen Welch started Crafts Gallery in Louisville in the summer. And they arranged for me to have my tapestries there from day one. And, and then I came along looking toward that fall and said, what about a photography show in October in connection with the Louisville photo biennial? And they had had a show of Laura Ross's pottery as their first show, my photography show was their second show. I had a friend from Wellesley who lived in France, who came to visit. She was very into photography. She went through 10 years of my photographs and chose work for that show and also was instrumental in exactly how it was going to be displayed. And that show was quite successful. And so I have had every two years, I have had at least one photography show in the Louisville Photo biennial since 2013.

Gates:

What are your photos of?

Adams:

They're mostly intimate landscapes as intimate landscapes, not great, big panoramic things, but more like getting into trees or getting into cows, or are getting into flowers, you know, things that are a little closer to you than a panoramic.

Adams:

And meanwhile, just like Penland, and I went to Santa Fe in 2004 to study photography at the oldest photography school in the country. And I sold all the sheep in 2003 before I did that.

Gates:

The what?

Adams:

The sheep. All the sheep flock because you know...I've now had 20 years of sheep, but the sheep were taking time. And I tried to cut the flock back and I cut back to 12 wonderful ewes and they all had brilliant, gorgeous lambs. And I was right back in the show ring. I hadn't done one thing as far as time management for myself. And at that point I had a horse I wanted to ride, you know, I just was doing too much. So I sold a lot of them. Uh, and then that last flock was sold to a friend who was at that point, president of the Lincoln Association, his wife actually bought the black ones and he bought the white ones. So now no sheep, but I still have sheep that live at other farms. So to this day I use Lincoln for my spinning.

I also did a lot of work, the middle of the 21st century... or that, that first decade of the 21st century about mountaintop removal mining. I went to the mountains and I witnessed tour, um, with KFTC and Wendell Berry. I think I was on the third tour to look at what was happening, the devastation. And so then I started having, I took a lot of photographs and I had weavings associated with mountains, or, and so we put them together. I had some shows for about three years there to help bring awareness to what was happening.

Nice thing is that the photographic archives at the University of Louisville is going to take my work and photographer John Nation's work, um, from the mountains that we met in 2007 in the mountains. But we had both started a little bit earlier taking photographs. And we had a show at the Louisville Public Library in 2015. And that's primarily the work that archives are going to take, but after I'd done that for a while, I needed to go back to a weaving things that would sell.

Gates:

Were the photographs selling?

Adams:

Well, at that point, I mean, all of that work was associated more with just building awareness. You know, it wasn't, it was just there, it was seen for a different reason. But over the years I've sold a lot of work. So I can't really pin it to one particular time. But I'm more interested in just the development of the work.

Adams:

In 2016, Jonathan and I went to Italy and we stayed in a flat town in Umbria, not a hill town, but a flat town. Okay, (). And we took one day, two day trips to hill towns in Umbria, Tuscany and () and over to the Adriatic. And I took a lot of photographs in each of these hill towns. And when I came home and started looking at them and playing with him, and I realized that I can make composites of images, some of the images from a particular town. So the show in 2017 for the Louisville photo biennial was these photo mosaics from Italy.

And then this last show this year was with my friend Marcia Hopkins. And we had known each other, played together, shot cameras together, posed for each other for about 15 years. And so we put the show together of current photographs and photographs we had taken over the next 15 years. And that was great fun. So in 2000 ... back to fiber ... all along, I've been weaving, do you know, big things or small things or commissioned things. There's a big commission that I did for the University Art Museum in, uh, 1994, for the dining room, but those belong to the Art Museum. And I think the faculty club where they were to go, it's now been remodeled in the Art Museum.

In 2016, I was introduced to a machine called a felt loom that was in Arturo Sandoval's studio at UK. And I'd heard about this device and I really wanted to play with it. And it's nothing but a collection of needles and rollers. So you put two layers of material together, put it through the machine and it comes out as one piece of fabric.

Gates:

Is that what that is?

Adams:

Yep, yep. That's what that is. So I did a little bit of work. I did a few pieces and I said, okay, it's just like the weaving problem that because I could play forever. I need to focus. With a weaving, I decided early on that I had come into art so late and to weaving that I, I couldn't just play around. I couldn't do table mats, blankets, clothes I had to focus. And so what I did was I said, everything has to have the functionality of a rug. So maybe it starts off on the wall and then it is across your couch and then it's on the floor. And then it's on the back porch where the dog sleeps, but that's the functionality I want in every weaving. So they're all very thick and solid and substantial, like that little thing over there. And here's a, here's a big one here.

Gates:

Where the tapestry idea came from?

Adams:

Well, tapestry is really technique. So the functionality of the rug is just the weaving part of it. And I also decided early on that not everything can be complex. So you can't do complex pattern weaving with yarns that have very complicated color relationships because the pattern gets lost in the color. So I decided that my complexity was going to be in the dying and the color and that the weaving was going to be very straightforward and not complicated. And even using tapestry techniques were going to be very basic. And I was going to use big yarns because I don't sit still very well. So when I got to the weaving part, I wanted it to go relatively fast.

Gates:

Hmm. So how do you decide when you're going to make a piece? You, you see it in your head and you ...

Adams:

Well, it may come from words. It may come from sketches. It may come from ideas and then suddenly the time is right to do this. And then it gets developed usually on graph paper eight and a half by 11 graph paper and using pastel crayons for color. And that's it. And then that gets translated into a plan for dyeing the yarns to make that happen. And they're dyed. This is a skein. And so I dye with the Japanese brush in this before I weave, but I can put lots of different colors on one scheme, so I can end up with an impressionistic effect.

Gates:

Okay. How did your math background help you with any of this?

Adams:

Yeah, it helps that I understand formulas. So here is a tapestry. You can see the weight of it. The surface has been brushed. So that's that soft feeling? There's a combination. This is called Spring on the Mountain. So these are basically trees. You're looking through trees. This is red bud with some Dogwood, some sky, some young grasses and trees. And the first one, this is the only, the second one that similar to this. The first one I did, I think is called Kentucky River Cover Crop. And you may have seen it because it's between the men's room and the women's room at Woodford Reserve.

Adams:

With weaving, I had to focus and I came out with a functionality of rug. So with the felting introduction, I realized the same thing was true that I could just play. And there were people doing all sorts of things with this machine. So I did two pieces and then I went off and looked at Chinese painters and I'd been in Japan. So I was really interested in those scrolls and the mountains. And I discovered that's Chinese landscape, but in the big mountain first, then the mountains in the middle ground, and then whatever in the foreground. And I said, that's layers. I can do that on the felt loom because I go through, I add things, I put it through again. So I made five pieces based on floating mountains and a waterfall from studying Chinese landscape painters. Then I also got interested ...

Gates:

Is that what you just showed us?

Adams:

No, that was a weaving. That wasn't no, that was not, that was a weaving. Cause I went back to talking about the, the weaving. This is a felted piece. Okay. So following Chinese landscape painters, I'd always been interested in the British landscape, painter Turner and especially his incredible sense of light. So I started studying Turner and this one was based on a waterfall. Oh, no wrong piece. I'm sorry. This is one. Yeah, but this is one from the Chinese painter, landscape painters. I'm sorry though. I was doing something else in the house and I got my with Turner, so I got mixed up. This is based on Chinese and this is two sided. So they're floating mountains in

the back. And this whole series for the most part were two-sided there was a triptych three pieces all together. And on each side they had floating mountains in the back.

Gates:

So it hung so you can see both sides?

Adams:

Yeah, yeah. And so I have, I have those that wall, which was Lincoln I've dyed that and then put it in where I wanted it. And I did, you know, extra white down the waterfall. So this is the kind of big pieces I've done with felting, but I just had a show June of 2019 in Lexington that I call Sacred Mountains. And there were a lot of views of Mount Fuji and other mountains. And most of the pieces were like this some bigger. And they were based on studying () Hokusai and also Turner and another Japanese painter. And after that show, I found some small bales of silk when I cleaned out my studio last fall. And so I started putting a layer of silk on top of the mountain images.

Gates:

Can you show me where the silk part is?

Adams:

You can see it, it's tiny white. And here's another one. This is more similar to the Fuji scenes in the show. But again, the silk, because of the way the light picks up the silk makes these quite, quite different. And here's one that's even more dramatic. And then I did a lot of these for that show were mounted like this on cradle frames. And so I did a couple of abstract ones afterwards.

Gates:

If you hadn't found the silk, what would you have done? Would you not have used it? It would be a little different image.

Adams:

Yeah. It would have been different. It would've been, well, yeah, it would have been entirely different.

Gates:

Sometimes you find things and you add them to what you're doing.

Adams:

Right. And what I found was I had taken a lot of workshops. Yeah. Especially when I was spinning and I had bought various kinds of supplies and I just hadn't looked at that stuff for quite a while. So that was exciting. And so since then I have done, uh, a series of table runners that look like this, but maybe with a little less silk, there's another one back here. So you see a little more color. This one is less so you can see there's more color coming through there. And the table runners are maybe that big.

And these look pretty fragile, but the table runners are... feel a little bit more substantial. But they can, they're washable, you know, you just have to steam them afterwards. They're fine. But now, uh, I've been there, done that and I've had a ... So I had this big show, sacred mountains, felted landscapes, exploring the felted landscape, June and Lexington. Then October, I had a photography show in Louisville at Crafts Gallery. Now Crafts Gallery has a lot of the felted work, both the table runners in the mountains from the sacred mountain show. And I'm back on the loom. My loom was tied up and I'm working at the loom. And what I want to do is I want to do a new piece for the show in March at the Lexington public library. And I want to show, I want to do a piece that's older and a piece that's brand new hang, both of them together, like the same size, but different. And so what I'm doing is just playing with the loom. Cause I haven't actually touched the loom until just recently, uh, because I've been working in photography and working in felting and the felting after it comes off, the machine also goes into a wet felting process. So it's a double thing.

Gates:

And you don't have that machine. Do you do that at UK?

Adams:

I had a small one on loan for almost a year, like 10 months. Yeah. So I had it at home, which was fantastic. Yep. Okay.

Gates: Does being down here on the Kentucky River help your art?

Adams:

Oh yes. And I'm very tied to the land to my animals. I always felt that my weaving was connected to the earth through the sheep. Yeah. It's part and parcel of everything I do. So the photography is just another aspect of it. Sharing my vision in a different way.

Gates:

And be connected to this land ...

Adams:

And connected to this land. Yeah. Forever, I hope.

Gates: Cool.

END OF INTERVIEW