



Bill Gordy on kilns & biscuits (01:53)

B. Gordy: There's one of the things he didn't want to trust me with, to start with, now this goes back to when I was about seventeen years old. He never wanted, didn't want to trust me when dealing with the big kilns. But I wanted it, I had a, I wanted some...

C. Mack: You said your father really loved firing, right?

B. Gordy: Oh lord yeah, and he was a perfectionist at it, at wood firing. And he would measure each piece you know, when you're filling your kiln, it was traditional to, to have a big jar, like when you're putting in about three deep always have the thick part of your hand right in there...you just touch it with your hand because you had to have it that far apart. So he was afraid that that I'd have it too far apart or too close (laughs). But anyway I soon got the feeling and...but of course we had to fire long hours without letting it rest for forty-eight hours. But firing wood kilns used to be sort of a community thing, all the community would come and I never thought they'd stay up all the night long.

C. Mack: Well I heard that the North Carolina people used to bring chickens and so forth to roast in the kiln.

B. Gordy: Oh yeah, yes sir. We used to, when we'd open the kiln you know, my daddy would open one of those big doors back when it was about four-hundred and fifty degrees and my mother would have a big pan of homemade biscuits you know, she'd stick them in there and right after a few minutes, they'd brown all over and boy were they good!

That was old fashioned Italian oven... baked biscuits you know.

C. Mack: So this was a... used to be sort of a... when the word went out that there was a fire going on at the Gordy's it's be a whole crowd of people from the community coming around.

B. Gordy: Yeah, and I had them here, used to...we would have them sometimes we'd have so many to tell you the truth they'd get a little in the way.

D.X. Gordy talks heritage and change (02:27)

D.X. Gordy: I thought I designed a new type of kiln out of wood and this old book showed the kiln drawing when the kiln was built in Dresden, Germany in the fifteenth century.

C. Mack: And that was built by whom, you say?

D.X. Gordy: Johann Goshen.

C. Mack: Goshen.

D.X. Gordy: So I'm at the pottery with my glazes, substitute from what I've been taught but my methods go back to Germany, unbeknownst to me. So when we think of traditional art, I don't know. I've been in pottery all my life, my dad made pottery and he had uncles and great uncles before him that made pottery. But when I think about tradition, I wonder what my tradition is. Pottery of course came down through me but then my dad had people hired from everywhere and they were bringing in new ways of doing it. We had people from Pennsylvania, from Texas, California, working for him and I remember those people coming in and out. And each one would seem to have a little different way of doing things. I'm wondering really where my tradition is other than that, I wanted to, in those days I made ware, I wouldn't make an art out of it. I may have changed that but I haven't changed my methods. I do it different without changing, I don't want to change anything that's good and I can't find any better method than the old methods of pottery. I think it would be like changing your brushes with an artist, art that had been there for centuries, you can't take the brushes and canvas from the artist and say use something else. So I think we already had the best methods as far as handcrafted pottery goes.