Earl Robbins

Earl Robbins Interview, May 13, 1987

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ER [00:00:01:000] I didn’t have no pipe to go by –.

TB [00:00:03:000] Okay.

ER [00:00:03:000] I sat down and I tried to make me one. And I’d work a little bit now and then on it, just a little bit at a time.

TB [00:00:09:000] Yes.

ER [00:00:10:000] ‘Till I’d get it made. And then I took a big wad of clay and I made the mold for it.

TB [00:00:17:000] How’d you do that? You had this slug, right?

ER [00:00:20:000] Yes, sir.

TB [00:00:22:000] Which is bigger than the pipe would be.

ER [00:00:24:000] Yes sir, but it shrinks, that clay does, you know?

TB [00:00:26:000] And how did you fix the clay in order to get that impression in there? You just took regular clay?

ER [00:00:31:000] Yes, sir. And just – roll out a piece and then bend it round in there, like a little bit bigger, and then when you mash down, it spreads out and I’ll cut a bit off, and pinch and mash it on down.

TB [00:00:41:000] And you took it out. Now that’s one side?

ER [00:00:44:000] Yes.

TB [00:00:46:000] How do you actually get the—.

ER [00:00:48:000] Oh, I’ve got a wad of clay for that.

TB [00:00:49:000] Two wads of clay?

ER [00:00:51:000] Yes, sir. I’ve got one at the first, though.

TB [00:00:52:000] Okay.

ER [00:00:54:000] And I press this down in it, you see that? Halfway in the pipe.

TB [00:00:57:000] Okay.

ER [00:00:58:000] And then I took it out and I pressed the other side down halfway.

TB [00:01:02:000] And another patty?

ER [00:01:03:000] Yes.

TB [00:01:04:000] Another piece of clay.

ER [00:01:06:000] Another piece of clay. And then when I got that in there, turn it out and I let them dry a little bit.

TB [00:01:09:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER [00:01:10:000] But the clay always shrinks up a little bit.

TB [00:01:12:000] Uh-huh. And that’s all you did?

ER [00:01:16:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB [00:01:17:000] Then you cut them so they fit together?

ER [00:01:19:000] Yes, sir. I lined them up where they’d fit together and cut the outside off. See, I cut this all down here—.

TB [00:01:25:000] Oh, yes.

ER [00:01:26:000] So it would fit.

TB [00:01:27:000] Uh-huh [yes]. Had you ever seen anybody do this before?

ER [00:01:29:000] No, sir.

TB [00:01:32:000] Your mother, never? Nobody?

ER [00:01:35:000] That’s the first I ever made.

TB [00:01:37:000] Now, where’d you get the idea from?

ER [00:01:39:000] Well, I didn’t have no pipe, and I had to do something to get a pipe like that. And I said, “I think I’ll try to make a pipe.” And I sat down and made it; come out pretty good.

TB [00:01:52:000] Yes.

ER [00:01:53:000] And then I made some molds from it.

TB [00:01:55:000] Right, right. And how many sets of molds did you make?

ER [00:01:58:000] I made one, but they broke when they were burnt.

TB [00:02:02:000] Yeah? And you had to do it again.

ER [00:02:05:000] Yes, but I made another pipe so it’d be bigger.

TB [00:02:08:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER [00:02:08:000] See that other was a little smaller than these there.

TB [00:02:09:000] Yes.

ER [00:02:10:000] So I want me one a little bit bigger. When it shrinks, it’d be about this size.

TB [00:02:17:000] Right.

ER [00:02:17:000] But, I hadn’t made none of these molds yet.

TB [00:02:19:000] Oh, this was made with a different mold?

ER [00:02:21:000] Yes, sir.

TB [00:02:24:000] And that mold broke?

ER [00:02:25:000] Yes, sir.

TB [00:02:26:000] Oh, I see. You haven’t used this mold yet?

ER [00:02:30:000] Not for any pipes.

TB [00:02:31:000] Oh. But this actually fits in there.

ER [00:02:33:000] That grandson of mine, he tried to mold some in there. Well, it might be a little bigger than that.

TB [00:02:38:000] Yes.

ER [00:02:39:000] It shrinks.

TB [00:02:45:000] You gonna make some, headed pots?

ER [00:02:48:000] I don’t know if I can or not. I might try.

TB [00:02:51:000] Yes. Now, are you using rolls of clay? You roll it out?

ER [00:02:56:000] Just a big wad of clay.

TB [00:02:58:000] Okay, you get a big wad of clay—.

ER [00:03:00:000] And get out what you want and start to work on it.

TB [00:03:02:000] Yes, but you roll it out into – like a snake?

ER [00:03:06:000] Oh, yes.

TB [00:03:08:000] So you made all these big ones with snake rolls. That’s what I call rolls.

ER [00:03:12:000] Oh, yes.

TB [00:03:13:000] Okay. Now this turtle, how’d you do it?

ER [00:03:16:000] Well, it was kind of hard for me to make. I hadn’t ever made none.

TB [00:03:19:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER [00:03:23:000] Don’t know where I can tell you exactly how I did it or not [laughs].

TB [00:03:26:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER [00:03:27:000] Get a wad of clay and I’d have pulled its legs out, like around here. Got a cup shell started with the legs on here, and this tail there.

TB [00:03:35:000] But that was all one piece?

ER [00:03:37:000] Yes. And then its head.

TB [00:03:39:000] But the head was one piece or did you insert that?

ER [00:03:41:000] The whole thing. No, sir, the whole thing was one piece.

TB [00:03:44:000] I see.

ER [00:03:45:000] But I had the head kind of sticking out a little bit further, you know.

TB [00:03:48:000] Uh-huh [yes]. Now how about this wedding vase?

ER [00:03:53:000] Well, I made that bottom part first. Then I made these sides, to go on. And I had a stick running down through there, so it’d keep it open.

TB [00:04:01:000] Yes.

ER [00:04:03:000] And this here lip is a different piece here – that I put on there, and the handles different.

TB [00:04:09:000] Okay. How’d you get the handle to stick on?

ER [00:04:12:000] Well I mashed it in with the clay, mixed it good.

TB [00:04:13:000] Uh-huh [yes]. Mixed it in with the clay. Did you make, like, a fork out of clay and press it around?

ER [00:04:18:000] Yes, I went down like that—.

TB [00:04:20:000] And pressed it in. Yeah. And how did you get these mounds – these tubes to fit on the—?

ER [00:04:28:000] Well, see on that, I just set it down on there, over that hole in there, add that little piece on it. And then I mashed – mended – real good around there.

TB [00:04:41:000] Aaah! But you couldn’t put your fingers inside.

ER [00:04:43:000] No, sir.

TB [00:04:44:000] Ah. So it’s just rough inside?

ER [00:04:45:000] Uh-huh.

TB [00:04:46:000] Yes.

ER [00:04:46:000] The pot is.

TB [00:04:46:000] Yes.

ER [00:04:47:000] But the hole’s all the way down through there.

TB [00:04:49:000] Right. Right. Oh, you could put water in there.

ER [00:04:51:000] Could; I don’t—well, you could.

TB [00:04:51:000] It would spoil it.

ER [00:04:53:000] But it might would hold water.

TB [00:04:55:000] Yes, it wouldn’t hold it, right, so the bottom is one piece.

ER [00:04:59:000] Yes, sir.

TB [00:05:00:000] Did you use rolls for it? Or just one piece of clay?

ER [00:05:02:000] I used a big piece of clay for it.

TB [00:05:03:000] Just a big chunk?

ER [00:05:04:000] Uh-huh [yes]. Worked it out in my hands.

TB [00:05:05:000] Okay. Then you put a cap on it.

ER [00:05:08:000] Yes, sir, I put a cap on it.

TB [00:05:09:000] And then you poked holes in the cap.

ER [00:05:11:000] Well, after it set up a little bit – I put two holes down there and put these on, these [unclear].

TB [00:05:17:000] Yes. And then these were one piece?

ER [00:05:18:000] Yes.

TB [00:05:18:000] Now, were these made with walls, these necks?

ER [00:05:20:000] No, sir.

TB: [00:05:20:000] That’s one piece of clay?

ER: [00:05:20:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:05:20:000] That whole length?

ER: [00:05:20:000] Well, I wrapped my piece around a stick, you notice when I rolled it out. Then I stuck the stick down in there, and worked it out from there.

TB: [00:05:20:000] I see.

ER [00:05:34:000] And I scraped and scraped on it, to get it smooth.

TB: [00:05:34:000] Yes. Do you take sandpaper to them?

ER: [00:05:34:000] Well, you could, I reckon.

TB: [00:05:34:000] But you don’t. You just use a damp rag.

ER [00:05:49:000] I might use a little bit of sandpaper on that thing.

TB: [00:05:49:000] Yes. These lips were different. That was attached.

ER: [00:05:49:000] Yes, that was attached.

TB: [00:05:49:000] And then the handle was one piece, attached.

ER: [00:05:49:000] Yes, sir.

TB: [00:05:49:000] I see. And how about these swans?

ER: [00:05:49:000] That’s from a big wad of clay, except for this part right here.

TB [00:06:06:000] The tail.

ER: [00:06:06:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:06:06:000] The tail is different.

ER: [00:06:06:000] Yes, sir. I didn’t know what kind of tail to make, so I put that on there.

TB: [00:06:06:000] It looks pretty good. That looks real nice.

ER: [00:06:06:000] I got one that’s different over here [Walking around, moving pottery pieces].

TB [00:06:18:000] Oh, yeah. An ashtray [laughs].

ER: [00:06:18:000] Ashtray.

TB: [00:06:18:000] Okay. Now, that’s one piece of clay, including the neck?

ER: [00:06:18:000] Including the neck and all.

TB: [00:06:18:000] Everything is one piece. Well, I’ll be.

ER: [00:06:18:000] See, I got a big ball of clay, and I work its head up there, kinda long, and I make a crook.

TB: [00:06:18:000] Yes.

ER [00:06:34:000] Then I start right here on this part.

TB: [00:06:34:000] Okay.

ER: [00:06:34:000] And when I get to back here, I go ahead and put his head on around.

TB: [00:06:34:000] Oh, I see. I see.

ER: [00:06:34:000] I had to put that little piece here on the back.

TB: [00:06:34:000] How about a round bowl, like this? Do you make a base first?

ER [00:06:51:000] Well, I just start off –.

TB: [00:06:51:000] To make the bottom?

ER: [00:06:51:000] Well, I had the bottom and both sides up on here.

TB: [00:06:51:000] Yeah.

ER: [00:06:51:000] And then I start on top of that there—

TB: [00:06:51:000] With the roll.

ER: [00:06:51:000] Come on up the roll, and then I got up here and I to go in with it. So I took down my board and kind of mashed it in going around with it.

TB [00:07:08:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER: [00:07:08:000] Till I got it like I want it.

TB: [00:07:08:000] Yeah. That’s nice. Now, how do you make a candleholder like that? How many pieces would that be?

ER [00:07:20:000] That’s two.

TB: [00:07:20:000] Okay.

ER: [00:07:20:000] The handle is one.

TB: [00:07:20:000] Okay.

ER: [00:07:20:000] This bottom’s just a wad of clay, and I take and work it around, and leave the middle part.

TB [00:07:33:000] So the middle is actually part of the bottom and wasn’t stuck on?

ER: [00:07:33:000] No, sir. It wasn’t.

TB: [00:07:33:000] Does everybody do it that way?

ER: [00:07:33:000] I don’t know.

TB: [00:07:33:000] Is that how your mama did it?

ER: [00:07:33:000] I don’t remember.

TB: [00:07:33:000] Yes. But your wife does it that way.

ER [00:07:46:000] Yes, sir, I think she does.

TB: [00:07:46:000] That’s how she does it.

ER: [00:07:46:000] I guess everybody does. But anyway, I made the handle next and stuck it on there.

TB: [00:07:46:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER: [00:07:46:000] Worked so damn good with the other part; done good with those.

TB [00:07:56:000] Right, right. This is beautiful stuff! How about the peace pipe?

ER: [00:07:56:000] That was hard for me to make. I might try and make some more one day; make them maybe a little bit better than that.

TB [00:08:12:000] I can give you some of the old designs people used on them.

ER: [00:08:12:000] Well, it’d be some designs something like this one, wouldn’t it?

TB: [00:08:12:000] Yes. Well, etched, on the turtle.

ER: [00:08:12:000] Yes, sir.

TB: [00:08:12:000] But you have to do it when the clay is wet. The clay would have to be a little wet, then you put the designs in.

ER: [00:08:12:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB [00:08:26:000] In like that.

ER: [00:08:26:000] That’s [unclear].

TB: [00:08:26:000] Yes. They look good! That looks nice! If you had done it when wet though, it would be smoother.

ER: [00:08:26:000] Yes, it might. Clay can be kind of rough; sticky like when it’s wet.

TB: [00:08:26:000] Is that right?

ER [00:08:39:000] If you scratch this when it’s dry, it’ll be more smoother.

TB: [00:08:39:000] Right. I’ll show you some pictures. I got some pictures in the car. Okay, now how many pieces was this peace pipe?

ER: [00:08:39:000] Well, three for the legs—.

TB: [00:08:39:000] Those are separate?

ER: [00:08:39:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:08:39:000] Now how do you attach the legs to the bowl?

ER [00:08:54:000] I get a little wad of clay and punch a hole through there. And put this down good, real good – the leg. And I get another piece and go around here; and I push it in for the stem.

TB: [00:08:54:000] For the stem.

ER [00:09:08:000] Four of them. And I make this one in here.

TB: [00:09:08:000] The bowl and the neck, that’s one piece?

ER: [00:09:08:000] Yes, sir.

TB: [00:09:08:000] Uh-huh [yes]. So you’ve got one piece, four stems and three legs.

ER: [00:09:08:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:09:20:000] That’s a lot of work.

ER: [00:09:20:000] Yes, it is. Lot of work, one of them.

TB: [00:09:20:000] Now, how do you do this?

ER: [00:09:20:000] Get me a wad of clay and kind of pat it out thin on one end.

TB: [00:09:20:000] Yes. What is this called?

ER: [00:09:20:000] A wall pocket.

TB: [00:09:20:000] Wall pocket?

ER: [00:09:34:000] Wall vase, or whatever they call them.

TB: [00:09:34:000] Yes.

ER: [00:09:34:000] Then I start to work my fingers down in there, you know, get me a rim. About as long as my fingers, too [laughs]! And I get this little end down here I’ve already got part of it out there – see the clay thicker back here.

TB: [00:09:51:000] Right, right.

ER: [00:09:51:000] Then I put a little rim around there.

TB: [00:09:51:000] Yes. That’s lovely. That is really nice. I haven’t seen this much pottery in a long time.

ER: [00:09:51:000] You haven’t?

TB: [00:09:51:000] No! No. Have many people come by to see it?

ER: [00:10:07:000] Not yet they haven’t. I just put it out here.

TB: [00:10:07:000] Well they will.

ER: [00:10:07:000] Yesterday morning, I believe.

TB: [00:10:07:000] I’ll tell them tonight. The people from McKissick – they’ll be here, they’ll take all of it, I bet.

ER: [00:10:07:000] I was trying to get this house done and I’m going to put a table through here to set it on.

TB: [00:10:21:000] Right, right.

ER: [00:10:21:000] Then I won’t have to take it out of the boxes every time.

TB: [00:10:21:000] Right, yes. You can just leave it. It’ll be your own little [unclear] people find out about it.

ER: [00:10:21:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:10:21:000] Did you tell those ladies that were here last time looking for a canoe?

ER: [00:10:35:000] Not yet.

TB: [00:10:35:000] I’ll drop them a line. I’ve got their address.

ER: [00:10:35:000] I better, because they’re buying. I don’t know whether she wants her to get or not.

TB: [00:10:35:000] I bet she – yes! I bet she does! These are nice canoes. Do you make canoes the same? way? Out of one piece of clay?

ER: [00:10:53:000] Yes, sir.

TB: [00:10:53:000] You don’t make rolls.

ER: [00:10:53:000] This here, well, sometimes [the] end is not quite as high as I want, and I put a piece on.

TB: [00:10:53:000] Put an extra piece—.

ER: [00:10:53:000] A little higher—.

TB: [00:10:53:000] Yes, yes.

ER: [00:11:04:000] I had a big ole long plate in here. And I got it out doors and I was sitting there –.

TB: [00:11:04:000] Rubbing it.

ER: [00:11:04:000] I was going straight down some more, you know. And I picked up one end and it just broke in the middle!

TB: [00:11:04:000] Aaah!

ER: [00:11:04:000] I jerked it up too fast.

TB: [00:11:18:000] So what’d you do with it then? Did you mold it back?

ER: [00:11:18:000] Yeah. I had to mold it over. I didn’t make another one, though.

TB: [00:11:18:000] Right.

ER: [00:11:18:000] They get too long, they break.

TB: [00:11:18:000] Not that big. This is beautiful stuff!

ER: [00:11:28:000] I’m going to make some of these.

TB: [00:11:28:000] Yeah, that’s a nice pitcher [thumps it twice]. How would you compare this with your mother’s work?

ER: [00:11:28:000] Well, I don’t know.

TB: [00:11:39:000] Did your mother make stuff this big?

ER: [00:11:39:000] Yes, sir, she made some, but she never did get it quite as smooth. Didn’t work it as long, as I did.

TB: [00:11:39:000] Right.

ER: [00:11:39:000] I worked on these. But I don’t know whether that looks all right or not.

TB: [00:11:54:000] I think so. It’s all beautiful! Beautiful stuff.

ER: [00:11:54:000] Well I haven’t seen anything I had a problem with.

TB: [00:11:54:000] Yes. Beautiful stuff. Now, where’d you get the idea for these arrowhead pipes? Did your mother make them?

ER: [00:12:07:000] Yes, she made some of those.

TB: [00:12:07:000] Are you going to make a mold for these?

ER: [00:12:07:000] No, sir. I can do it right quick by hand.

TB: [00:12:07:000] How do you do that?

ER: [00:12:18:000] Get a wad of clay, pat it out thin on one end; and make a bowl up here with a stem on it. And take and cut this off in kind of a shape while the clay’s kind of wet.

TB: [00:12:18:000] Right.

ER: [00:12:18:000] But it’s not too wet, when I’m going to scrape it.

TB: [00:12:18:000] Yes. Who’s been helping you with your prices?

ER: [00:12:34:000] Nobody.

TB: [00:12:34:000] Nobody? This is your idea?

ER: [00:12:34:000] Yes [laughs].

TB: [00:12:34:000] They are very reasonable prices.

ER: [00:12:34:000] I told ma one day, think I’ll just quit making pots [laughs].

TB: [00:12:47:000] Oh, I don’t think so. I think you’ll have people coming down here. As soon as they find out, they’ll be running down here.

ER: [00:12:47:000] You can put a lot of work into one of them things!

TB: [00:12:47:000] Sure! How many hours did you put in this big wedding vase?

ER: [00:12:59:000] Oh goodness, there’s no telling on that one!

TB: [00:12:59:000] That’s a masterpiece! Let me put some aside; and I’ll tell the McKissick Museum to get down here next week. And if they say no; I’ll let you know. I’ll find out tomorrow.

ER: [00:13:23:000] Yes.

TB: [00:13:23:000] I’ll put some pieces aside for them. I’ll find out if they have the money, and can come up here; because they would want some of this stuff.

ER: [00:13:37:000] I guess I’ll have to make some more then. I’ll start back.

TB: [00:13:37:000] How long did you work on this?

ER: [00:13:37:000] Oh, I worked all winter!

TB: [00:13:37:000] All winter!

ER: [00:13:37:000] Yes!

TB: [00:13:37:000] That’s a good winter project!

ER: [00:13:48:000] Up until I got busy working in my garden. Then it was time to start in here. I said, “I think I’ll do me a house, put my pots in.”

TB: [00:13:48:000] As so you built this little shed?

ER: [00:13:48:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:13:48:000] This is nice! You going to put a sign on the roof?

ER: [00:14:02:000] Yes. My first sign I bought was a 10’ x 20’ and 12’ x 12’. And before I even got it started, said “I think I’ll make it 14 and I kept on and said think I’ll make it 18! And I kept coming across these old [unclear]. I got to take them back out and change that banner.

TB: [00:14:16:000] Right, right. Well, it looks nice. This is beautiful stuff! This is really beautiful stuff. I hadn’t seen so much pretty— [footsteps – walking around].

ER: [00:14:29:000] My old butt is giving me trouble.

TB: [00:14:29:000] Oh, really?

ER: [00:14:29:000] Sitting down, what gets me.

TB: [00:14:29:000] Yes, it’s hard.

ER: [00:14:29:000] When I first started off with something like this –.

TB: [00:14:29:000] Yes. You started with a small wedding vase. Now, where’d you get the idea to go and make something as grand as that?

ER: [00:14:42:000] I started thinking I’d make it a little taller. So I [laughs] got it a little bit taller.

TB: [00:14:42:000] So you made it like that.

ER: [00:14:42:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:14:42:000] And all of a sudden, you got up like this.

TB: [00:14:42:000] That’s a masterpiece. An absolute masterpiece.

ER: [00:14:55:000] I don’t know what you’d call that, whether you’d call it a twin pitcher, or—.

TB: [00:14:55:000] A wedding jar.

ER: [00:14:55:000] A wedding jug?

TB: [00:14:55:000] Yeah, that’s what I’d call it. Wedding jar, wedding jug.

ER: [00:14:55:000] Yes, some of them call it a wedding jug. Mine tend to have no lips on it.

TB: [00:15:09:000] Most of them don’t have lips like that.

ER: [00:15:09:000] If this had a lip on it, it could be a wedding pitcher then, couldn’t it?

TB: [00:15:09:000] Right, right. It sure could. Absolutely beautiful work! Absolutely—.

ER: [00:15:26:000] Let’s see that might be all of them I made this year. I put my twelve in, you know.

TB: [00:15:26:000] Yes.

ER: [00:15:26:000] In 1986, I didn’t get the date on some of them.

TB: [00:15:26:000] Right.

ER: [00:15:36:000] I’d work on some more of them; some you don’t have room for all that much on them.

TB: [00:15:36:000] No, no.

ER: [00:15:36:000] Like that little old pipe here, that hardly has room on it [unclear].

TB: [00:15:47:000] Well, you could have put feathers up here [unclear]. I bet you could [laughs].

TB: [00:15:47:000] Yes, you could do anything you want! I’ve heard that you’re really talented. Several people have told me.

ER: [00:16:05:000] Now, this is the first one that I made.

TB: [00:16:05:000] That’s the first bowl? When I asked you for a bowl, and then you made that?

ER: [00:16:05:000] Yes. But see, it turned a little bit. I was using that pine bark. Look at that.

TB: [00:16:15:000] That stuff is bad, isn’t it? Spoils it.

ER: [00:16:15:000] And then I went and made that one over there, this year.

TB: [00:16:15:000] Yes, ’87.

ER: [00:16:28:000] Now, right here, I spelled something on it, I think. Right there, I can’t see—.

TB: [00:16:28:000] You spelled your name.

ER: [00:16:42:000] Now that did all right, too.

TB: [00:16:42:000] That one’s okay.

ER: [00:16:42:000] There’s another one I had that might well have been one of those. It could’ve been—.

TB: [00:16:55:000] Yes. Absolutely beautiful work, Earl. That’s really nice. When I see the people at McKissick tomorrow, I’ll tell them they better get up here right away.

ER: [00:16:55:000] Yes [yes].

TB: [00:16:55:000] And I’ll put some pieces aside.

ER: [00:16:55:000] All right.

TB: [00:17:08:000] Is Mrs., is Mrs. Robbins—?

ER: [00:17:08:000] She’s not here. Yes, she’s making some, but she hadn’t put it out here yet.

TB: [00:17:08:000] Yes! You’ll have people coming back here. You put a sign up there. What are you going to put on the sign?

ER: [00:17:19:000] I don’t know what to put on there.

TB: [00:17:19:000] Just “Catawba Pottery?”

ER: [00:17:19:000] Yes, that’ll work.

TB: [00:17:19:000] Yes. Has, anybody seen this stuff?

ER: [00:17:19:000] No, sir.

TB: [00:17:19:000] Reola?

ER: [00:17:33:000] No sir. Nobody but my daughter.

TB: [00:17:33:000] Yeah. Is she making?

ER: [00:17:33:000] No. She’s not making it.

TB: [00:17:33:000] She’s not making yet?

ER: [00:17:33:000] She said she don’t want to fool with that stuff.

TB: [00:17:33:000] Well, maybe one day. Maybe one day she will. I like these wall pockets.

ER: [00:17:47:000] And I hadn’t ever made one of these.

TB: [00:17:47:000] Uh-huh [yes]. Uh, what do you call that?

ER: [00:17:47:000] That’s a—.

TB: [00:17:47:000] Loving cup. And they usually make it sunk up in here, but I made mine flat so I can put my name on everything.

TB: [00:18:01:000] Oh, I see. Yes, they do make them with the bottom pushed up inside. This is beautiful stuff! Really, really pretty. So, wedding vase just kind of evolved into this big—.

ER: [00:18:16:000] Yes [unclear].

TB: [00:18:16:000] That is absolutely incredible. And this small one was the first one you made?

ER: [00:18:27:000] Well it was about the first, I reckon.

TB: [00:18:27:000] Yes. Well that looks like your wife’s. Hers are about like that, aren’t they?

ER: [00:18:27:000] That might be. The bowl. One of [unclear] is bigger.

TB: [00:18:27:000] Right. Yes, I’ve got one of hers at home.

ER: [00:18:42:000] See, I got a hole all the way down to there, too. In all of them [dog barks].

TB: [00:18:42:000] They’re beautiful. Absolutely beautiful.

ER: [00:18:57:000] Well I know she made something like this, my wife did.

TB: [00:18:57:000] That’s a wedding jar with just one handle.

ER: [00:18:57:000] I said, “I think I’ll try and make one of those.” And I made six, I think.

TB: [00:18:57:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER: [00:19:09:000] [Unclear] – but I get up at two o’clock and go to work on this stuff, when I’m working.

TB: [00:19:09:000] Oh, do you really? No kidding?

ER: [00:19:09:000] I go to bed every night at seven.

TB: [00:19:09:000] It looks like you worked hard. That you were really inspired?

ER: [00:19:09:000] I went to bed early.

TB: [00:19:09:000] Uh-huh [yes].

ER: [00:19:24:000] I don’t sleep all that much and I just get up at two o’clock and start on them.

TB: [00:19:24:000] Good God! Well, they just – it’s gorgeous! It’s really, really a sight!

ER: [00:19:24:000] Two in the morning, two till daylight.

TB: [00:19:38:000] Just a sight to behold! Oh, you won’t have any trouble. When you get a sign out on the road, it’ll be gone in no time.

ER: [00:19:38:000] I believe it’s worth more than ten dollars that one. It took a lot of time.

TB: [00:19:38:000] Well, you just have to see how people react, and see what other people are doing.

ER: [00:19:57:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:20:00:000] And you’ll come up with a price that you think is fair. And it’ll be gone pretty fast. Let me go through here and pick out some stuff.

ER: [00:20:10:000] Just don’t get these two [laughs].

TB: [00:20:10:000] No! No. I’d like you to make me a set. Sometime when you’re making molds. And the slug too.

ER: [00:20:10:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:20:10:000] One that goes with it, so I have the whole thing.

ER: [00:20:21:000] Well, you see, that slug, now it takes me a long time on that.

TB: [00:20:21:000] That’s hard to make. Well, now that you’ve got a model would it be easier? That’s a nice vase.

ER: [00:20:21:000] Yes.

TB: [00:20:34:000] Did you have a pipe to model?

ER: [00:20:34:000] No, sir, I didn’t have a pipe.

TB: [00:20:34:000] Just memory?

ER: [00:20:34:000] Uh-huh [yes], just remembered.

TB: [00:20:34:000] Yes. Did your mother have pipe molds?

ER: [00:20:34:000] I don’t know whether she did or not.

TB: [00:20:48:000] It looks very much like the pipe molds, that Martha Jane Harris used to make.

ER: [00:20:48:000] I think I made one, one time, but [for] another pipe. A pipe mold but I swear it went with that.

TB: [00:20:48:000] Yes.

ER: [00:20:48:000] But I had designed by hand.

TB: [00:21:03:000] And didn’t know.

ER: [00:21:03:000] Yes, I got a big wad of clay and let it kind of get dry; then I start to work on it.

TB: [00:21:03:000] Right. That’s beautiful. That’s really nice. Well, you can make molds out of this indefinitely. You can make set after set.

ER: [00:21:22:000] Uh-huh [yes]. They’re going to be smaller now too.

TB: [00:21:22:000] Let’s see what I’ve got here. This— [long pause, boxes being moved].

ER: [00:21:38:000] Let me move that box over there, and you can have some room.

TB: [00:21:38:000] Yes, I’ll just put the stuff that I think the McKissick would—.

ER: [00:21:46:000] Oooh. My back, tell you what, bothers me so bad. That might be the one I messed up on there.

TB: [00:21:46:000] Maybe, maybe you had to do it over again. Yes. Probably had to scrape—.

ER: [00:22:07:000] [Unclear] that got messed up [laughs]. I’d rub it down.

TB: [00:22:07:000] Well, now, let’s see.

TB: [00:22:27:000] Where’d you get the idea for this plate?

ER: [00:22:27:000] I just set down and, one day, and said, “I think I’ll make me something.” And that’s what I came up with.

TB: [00:22:27:000] It’s the same way you made the legs and the handles.

ER: [00:22:27:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:22:40:000] And you put poked two holes in the handles?

ER: [00:22:40:000] Well, I did down here; but up here I kind of made it gored. Worked it in. Then I smoothed it down so it’d be about straight.

TB: [00:22:52:000] Yes.

ER: [00:22:52:000] Then when it dried, I scraped it. I didn’t put the date on that one though.

TB: [00:23:00:000] That’s a nice pipe. That’s a pretty one. Let’s see here. Now, they’re liable to go through and find things that they like.

ER: [00:23:14:000] That’s all right.

TB: [00:23:14:000] But I just didn’t want this to get gone.

ER: [00:23:14:000] They might even like, uh—. What was I going to say?

TB: [00:23:14:000] Yes, a small one of these. Let me put a small one over there.

ER: [00:23:28:000] They might would like it if it was here. But if I got it hid from them, they won’t see it.

TB: [00:23:28:000] Well I’m going to tell them.

ER: [00:23:28:000] Oh, are you?

TB: [00:23:28:000] I’m going to tell them these are the pieces they’re to take.

ER: [00:23:28:000] Oh they are?

TB: [00:23:28:000] And if they want some more, I’ll just tell them, “Do you want them, or not? You go on up.” I’ll have them call you, and make an appointment to come get this stuff.

ER: [00:23:50:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:23:50:000] And I hope they do it. . But these are the pieces that I’ll take.

ER: [00:23:50:000] I’m going to try and go get some clay though. I want some blue clay, but I couldn’t find any one day I was over there.

TB: [00:24:13:000] Let me turn this thing off. I’ll go get some paper and write—.

NOTE: [00:24:13:000] PAUSE IN RECORDING

TB: [00:24:13:000] So how’d they do this? Say that again so we can get this.

Margaret Robbins: [00:24:13:000] Okay, well, they started out small.

TB: [00:24:13:000] With a small wedding vase. Two of them were working together?

MR: [00:24:25:000] Right. They used to be curved necked loving cups. Then mama made one a little bit taller.

TB: [00:24:25:000] Uh-huh [yes].

MR: [00:24:25:000] But dad, he got bored and made one a little bit taller than that. And then, mama set one taller. And they finally reached a height that they better not do any taller [laughs]. ‘cause I don’t know if it would hold up.

ER: [00:24:45:000] I first made one like, this here. Then she’d go make one like it. She made it a little taller.

MR: [00:24:45:000] Yes, that, that’s the way it was. That small one and y’all kept making them a little bit taller.

ER: [00:24:45:000] And every time I’d make one taller than hers, she’d make one taller than mine!

MR: [00:24:56:000] You took the curve out and started making them straight.

ER: [00:24:56:000] Until I made that big one, and she said she wasn’t going any higher [laughs]!

MR: [00:24:56:000] Look at this here.

TB: [00:24:56:000] That’s all right. Just beautiful stuff! Really, really nice.

MR: [00:25:11:000] He is just so picky! Did you see these ducks here?

TB: [00:25:11:000] Yes.

ER: [00:25:11:000] That’s not a duck girl. That’s a swan. Yes [unclear].

MR: [00:25:11:000] Oh, is it? Oh, okay. Yes!

TB: [00:25:11:000] Let me see how much I spent here.

MR: [00:25:24:000] That thing there was mine. Right there, I loved that [unclear] with that big tall one there, the way it burned. This is beautiful! I want you to make me a big one like this though [unclear]. I’ll show you how, a big one [laughs].

Viola Robbins: [00:25:42:000] That’s pretty good.

MR: [00:25:42:000] I tried to make a turtle, but it didn’t turn out too good.

ER: [00:25:55:000] Here’s a pitcher I lathed. Uh-oh [crashing sounds].

TB: [00:25:55:000] Make a swan.

TB: [00:26:12:000] It’s beautiful. The prettiest stuff I’ve seen in years! It really is.

VR: [00:26:12:000] You got to take your time with it, you know.

TB: [00:26:12:000] Yes. Yes.

VR: [00:26:12:000] That’s what you have to do though.

ER: [00:26:12:000] Tell him what time I get up in the morning.

VR: [00:26:26:000] About three.

MR: [00:26:26:000] Sometimes [unclear].

ER: [00:26:26:000] Yes [unclear].

MR: [00:26:26:000] Well see, that’s when nobody’s around. The kids [unclear].

ER: [00:26:26:000] Well see, I go to bed about—.

MR: [00:26:26:000] Your two grandkids aren’t here to aggravate you [laughter].

ER: [00:26:38:000] About seven or seven-thirty.

MR: [00:26:38:000] I couldn’t! I tell you, that’s –.

ER: [00:26:38:000] Whenever it gets dark, I’m in bed. In wintertime, I mean summer time, I have to go to bed before dark to get to bed at that time!

MR: [00:26:48:000] You know, I’d like to get one of those stands over there, put a couple of feathers on it; and that’s just like what you buy up Cherokee, isn’t it?

VR: [00:26:48:000] How much was this [unclear]?

MR: [00:26:48:000] Eight dollars. Did you have a home for this daddy?

TB: [00:27:05:000] I’ll make two lists here.

MR: [00:27:29:000] I like that right there. I’d like to have a big one like that, to put on my table. That’s pretty; I love the black on the bottom. Mama had a big peace pipe, didn’t you mama?

TB: [00:27:49:000] Check the figures.

MR: [00:27:49:000] That’s for the whole tribe [laughs].

TB: [00:27:49:000] Check my arithmetic. I’m not too bright with arithmetic. I’ll give you twenty-eight, and then I’ll owe you a hundred.

ER: [00:27:49:000] Good.

TB: [00:28:00:000] Is that okay?

ER: [00:28:00:000] Uh-huh [yes].

TB: [00:28:00:000] Okay. Now I made two lists. That’s for you, and one for McKissick. And if the people come tomorrow, from the Schiele Museum, don’t give them this. Let them pick from this.

MR: [00:28:22:000] He’s got plenty!

TB: [00:28:22:000] I doubt if they’ll come down here. They might come and look, but, don’t give them this.

MR: [00:28:22:000] Are you getting both of those tall ones?

TB: [00:28:31:000] Unh-huh [no]. This one. And I’m going to tell the McKissick Museum tomorrow to come and get these pieces right here. I picked those for them. And I’ll tell you tomorrow; I’ll call tomorrow night whether they want it or not.

ER: [00:28:31:000] Well, you said don’t show them these. You said—.

TB: [00:28:52:000] Don’t show the Schiele Museum. This is for McKissick.

ER: [00:28:52:000] Oh, oh, McKissick.

TB: [00:28:52:000] Okay? I’ll put it on it.

MR: [00:28:52:000] What are you going to do, stick it in a box, daddy?

ER: [00:28:52:000] Well, just tell them [unclear]—.

TB: [00:29:04:000] McKissick Museum.

MR: [00:29:04:000] Well, I’ll come daddy. I’ll be here—.

TB: [00:29:04:000] It’s McKissick Museum.

MR: [00:29:04:000] Where they at?

TB: [00:29:04:000] Uh, Columbia.

MR: [00:29:04:000] Columbia.

TB: [00:29:14:000] So it’s a swan, a pocket – that’s ten. Arrow—.

MR: [00:29:28:000] I just can’t sit that long, I guess that’s my trouble.

ER: [00:29:28:000] You could if you’d start, if it was dark and you didn’t want to get outdoors, just sit there and make them [laughs].

MR: [00:29:28:000] I can read a book, but I just can’t sit that long! [I] couldn’t mess with something like that.

ER: [00:29:40:000] Sure a lot better than reading an old book!

MR: [00:29:40:000] I don’t know about that. I love to read —.

ER: [00:29:40:000] Someone else made the book and you make a mess [laughter].

MR: [00:29:40:000] But you learn so much. I just can’t get mine this straight and smooth,

TB: [00:29:57:000] Takes practice.

MR: [00:29:57:000] I know it.

TB: [00:29:57:000] You’re just going to have to do it.

MR: [00:29:57:000] I went with him and got some clay; we got some clay the other day. About a week ago, a couple of weeks ago. These would be nice, where you get that stem neck.

ER: [00:30:20:000] That thing’s hard to make [unclear].

MR: [00:30:20:000] I bet it was!

ER: [00:30:20:000] [Unclear].

MR: [00:30:20:000] I bet it was harder, wouldn’t it?

ER: [00:30:20:000] Uh-huh [yes].

MR: [00:30:31:000] I like this one. Look how big this is! They’re so cute. Every time I come down here, they have a tall one, then a taller one, and then a taller one!

TB: [00:30:48:000] A regular contest.

MR: [00:30:48:000] Yes!

ER: [00:30:48:000] [Unclear] seen that, she said, “I ain’t, I ain’t going no taller!” It wasn’t that tall!

MR: [00:30:48:000] Did she make one dad?

ER: [00:30:48:000] Like that?

MR: [00:30:59:000] She didn’t make one that tall? But those are hard to make, you know?

TB: [00:30:59:000] Yeah, they are! And they’re beautiful!

MR: [00:30:59:000] They are pretty –.