

2-20-2011

Tess Little interview for a Wright State University History Course

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Tess Little

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Castillo-Alvarez, G., & Little, T. (2011). Tess Little interview for a Wright State University History Course. .
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1

00:00:00,320 --> 00:00:08,720

It is um February 20 um, 2011, and um I am here interviewing um

2

00:00:08,900 --> 00:00:16,980

Doctor Tess Little. Um she is a professor... I'm not a doctor. Ah she's a professor at um at

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00:00:16,980 --> 00:00:24,100

Sinclair Community ah College, and she is very much involved in the community. Um and

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00:00:24,360 --> 00:00:33,960

I at my initial question is how ah did you get involved with the community. I guess

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00:00:34,220 --> 00:00:40,860

I've always been involved with the community. Um What prompted, what, there had to be something... Hold on. I'm a teacher

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00:00:47,140 --> 00:00:55,440

and I like people and I like to see things get done. And....

7

00:00:55,760 --> 00:01:01,820

I like to coordinate... I like to coordinate things I like to bring things together. So I guess it was just natural

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00:01:02,000 --> 00:01:05,360

I mean my father is a

9

00:01:05,369 --> 00:01:11,549

minister or was a minister he's now retired and elderly and not well but ah so

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00:01:11,549 --> 00:01:15,330

I grew up watching him being very involved with community in the church

11

00:01:15,330 --> 00:01:20,790

and maybe I learned it from him. You know. Just, I don't know, it just seemed to be

12

00:01:20,790 --> 00:01:23,450

what you do.

13

00:01:26,280 --> 00:01:31,900

Um You are a person very involved with promoting diversity and art within the

14

00:01:31,900 --> 00:01:39,610

Dayton community. Um Why do you think that's important. I think it's crucial. It's not

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00:01:39,610 --> 00:01:45,670

just important. It is in order to be successful as a community and as a

16

00:01:45,670 --> 00:01:55,530

nation and as a global community. Um We need to find similarities between cultures,

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00:01:55,530 --> 00:02:00,640

understand one another, and learn how to get along, and learn how to enjoy the

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00:02:00,640 --> 00:02:05,530

strengths and beauties of the many different cultures that there are. Um.

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00:02:05,530 --> 00:02:13,180

I feel that education is the key to the solution for ah many of our problems and

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00:02:13,180 --> 00:02:19,690

ills and things that are wrong today and I think that ah if we study more about

21

00:02:19,690 --> 00:02:23,800

diversity or just study different cultures or if we sent every high school

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00:02:23,800 --> 00:02:27,670

senior on a trip to another culture and
let them stay there three months or

23

00:02:27,670 --> 00:02:35,290

something I think that that do more to
help, help our culture really understand

24

00:02:35,290 --> 00:02:40,600

one another. And it is just so
important. I mean that's all there is to

25

00:02:40,600 --> 00:02:48,580

success, to happiness, to everything
personally in in community wise for

26

00:02:48,580 --> 00:03:00,989

healthy community. Um, how did um the REACH um program start. Well I'm Appalachian, and

27

00:03:00,989 --> 00:03:06,190

my parents came here from Eastern
Kentucky and had there been money and

28

00:03:06,190 --> 00:03:12,160

jobs I would have been born and raised
in Kentucky. Um and I grew up thinking that

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00:03:12,160 --> 00:03:18,220

Kentucky was home. I lived in Fairborn ah in an enclave of Appalachian and

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00:03:18,220 --> 00:03:23,110

Appalachian neighborhood called Wright
View. And when I went to college, a lot of

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00:03:23,110 --> 00:03:30,130

times I felt um I didn't feel at home. I
didn't feel comfortable. It was a

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00:03:30,130 --> 00:03:34,720

different culture. Mainstream culture was a different culture and I didn't really

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00:03:34,720 --> 00:03:38,650

understand why and a lot of times I just felt bad or felt like there's something

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00:03:38,650 --> 00:03:43,209

wrong with me. And so um I tried to figure that

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00:03:43,209 --> 00:03:48,099

out and try to try to decide how, how I was going to make it in this mainstream

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00:03:48,099 --> 00:03:54,549

culture. When I started teaching at Sinclair, I realized I listen. I think

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00:03:54,549 --> 00:03:58,209

it's really important to listen to your students and listen to the people around

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00:03:58,209 --> 00:04:03,849

you. And I'm lucky because I was teaching an art class and once that the students

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00:04:03,849 --> 00:04:07,599

started to work they got their projects and they started to work than they would

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00:04:07,599 --> 00:04:14,469

start to talk. So art was a beautiful vehicle um to allow folks to open up,

41

00:04:14,469 --> 00:04:20,109

students to open up and I would listen.

And in my, my neighborhood when I was

42

00:04:20,109 --> 00:04:22,930

growing up there weren't any
African-American people. It was all white

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00:04:22,930 --> 00:04:30,370

and all Appalachian and um one of the things that I soon noticed with my

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00:04:30,370 --> 00:04:34,060

African-American students and my
Appalachian students as they were saying

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00:04:34,060 --> 00:04:37,435

a lot of the same things. The complaints
were the same. The issues were the same.

46

00:04:38,560 --> 00:04:44,710

The problems were the same. And um in the students I would see a student who would

47

00:04:44,710 --> 00:04:48,789

be so talented. I could see the talent. I
could see their intelligence, but they

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00:04:48,789 --> 00:04:56,050

dropped out or they wouldn't make it. And
and I started asking why. And ah about 10

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00:04:56,050 --> 00:05:01,870

years later, letting it all ferment in my
brain and just watch and read and study

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00:05:01,870 --> 00:05:05,680

and try to learn as best I could, I
figured out that there are a lot of

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00:05:05,680 --> 00:05:09,880

similarities between the Appalachian and

African-American population and that the

52

00:05:09,880 --> 00:05:14,740

problems that they had were, were with
the mainstream beliefs and values that

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00:05:14,740 --> 00:05:20,259

that we did not have that I did not have.
For instance, I was taught that family

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00:05:20,259 --> 00:05:24,759

was everything but in the mainstream
media individual is the most important

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00:05:24,759 --> 00:05:28,810

and my culture it's not all right to go
off and leave your family and in the

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00:05:28,810 --> 00:05:32,110

mainstream culture you go out and get
the best job and if it just so happens

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00:05:32,110 --> 00:05:35,889

to be across the continent that's okay.
You live you know home is where your hat

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00:05:35,889 --> 00:05:40,090

is and in my culture it was pride of
place and sense of place was so

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00:05:40,090 --> 00:05:47,050

important. So there were lots of
differences. So um, so I developed, I looked

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00:05:47,050 --> 00:05:52,760

at Dayton and Dayton is very, very
segregated. It's not as segregated as it

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00:05:52,760 --> 00:05:57,710
was in the 70s and 80s and 90s but it's
gotten a little better but still needs a

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00:05:57,710 --> 00:06:04,160
lot of improvement but um I looked at
Third Street and in Fairborn Third

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00:06:04,160 --> 00:06:08,090
Street is Colonel Glenn Highway and it
connects Wright View which is an

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00:06:08,090 --> 00:06:14,360
Appalachian community um that has
diversified some now but and then we

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00:06:14,360 --> 00:06:17,990
went down to through east Dayton which
was an Appalachian community. We cross

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00:06:17,990 --> 00:06:21,500
the river and we went into west Dayton
which was an African-American community

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00:06:21,500 --> 00:06:25,880
and only we went on to Drexel which is
an Appalachian community and it all

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00:06:25,880 --> 00:06:32,740
seemed to be the whole gamut of, of the
people of Dayton of all this

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00:06:32,740 --> 00:06:36,680
separateness and all this segregation
and it was all connected on the same

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00:06:36,680 --> 00:06:42,830
street. They all lived on the same main
highway and, and so I came up with REACH

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00:06:42,830 --> 00:06:47,600

which stands for Realizing Ethnic
Awareness and Cultural Heritage and it

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00:06:47,600 --> 00:06:57,080

went to my Dean and he said at the
second or first or second year he, he you

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00:06:57,080 --> 00:07:00,740

know he would say we'll think about it
and third year he said go out and see if

74

00:07:00,740 --> 00:07:05,900

you can find some interest. Well being an
Appalachian I didn't know that meant go

75

00:07:05,900 --> 00:07:10,430

out and write a white paper. He said go
out and find some interest. So I went out

76

00:07:10,430 --> 00:07:15,200

and found the interest. I knew the
interest was there. So I decided I'd have

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00:07:15,200 --> 00:07:20,750

a conference, and I had 160 people
enrolled in that first conference. When

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00:07:20,750 --> 00:07:25,550

the president came to me of the college
and he said, "What's going on? What are you

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00:07:25,550 --> 00:07:30,410

doing?" And I said, "Well the Dean told me
to go find to find some interests and I

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00:07:30,410 --> 00:07:36,230

found the interest. And I'm showing the Dean that I have interest." So ah, so the

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00:07:36,230 --> 00:07:41,360

president then put, gave me a budget of five thousand dollars and um

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00:07:41,360 --> 00:07:49,250

I had the first REACH Across Dayton Conference in 1994. Um and 160 people came

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00:07:49,250 --> 00:07:53,570

and it was a fabulous conference. It looked at the differences and, and but it

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00:07:53,570 --> 00:07:56,810

focuses on similarities. REACH focuses on similarities between

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00:07:56,810 --> 00:08:01,010

cultures. Because I believe that we have so much more in common than we have

86

00:08:01,010 --> 00:08:05,810

differences. And if we find those commonalities and we make friends and we

87

00:08:05,810 --> 00:08:10,430

discuss and we learn what we have in common, then when differences arise we

88

00:08:10,430 --> 00:08:14,210

don't have as many problems. We can iron out our differences because we have a

89

00:08:14,210 --> 00:08:20,540

basis. We have a foundation of friendship, of acquaintances, of knowledge about the

90

00:08:20,540 --> 00:08:27,470
culture and, and so um that's how REACH
started. The second and third year I got a

91
00:08:27,470 --> 00:08:31,250
grant and then after that the fourth
year the college funded it as a

92
00:08:31,250 --> 00:08:32,920
permanent program. We're in our 18th year
this year and I already have almost 300

93
00:08:35,780 --> 00:08:45,490
people enrolled for the conference next
Friday. Um so Um you indicated that it

94
00:08:45,490 --> 00:08:52,760
you approach the Dean a couple of times
prior. Um what makes you keep going? I mean

95
00:08:52,760 --> 00:08:58,820
most people the first time like okay
well they might you know... Well, I saw it

96
00:08:58,820 --> 00:09:02,990
every day in my classroom. I was living
it. I was teaching it. I was seeing

97
00:09:02,990 --> 00:09:09,050
students fail. I was talking with
students every day and, and saying you know

98
00:09:09,050 --> 00:09:16,280
things like um "Try it this way or think
about it this way or the reason you have

99
00:09:16,280 --> 00:09:21,860
that belief is because. This is your
culture. And if you look at

100

00:09:21,860 --> 00:09:25,190

the mainstream, try to figure out what
the mainstream belief is and then try to

101

00:09:25,190 --> 00:09:30,320

figure out how you fit. And maybe say to
yourself today I can do the mainstream

102

00:09:30,320 --> 00:09:34,550

thing at school and when I go home I
will be who I am." I think later on I

103

00:09:34,550 --> 00:09:38,540

learned that that's called a fence
setter or code switcher where you become

104

00:09:38,540 --> 00:09:42,440

you're in one culture, you know, at
home and you're in another culture at

105

00:09:42,440 --> 00:09:47,120

work. And to tell students that that was
okay. It was alright to be a code

106

00:09:47,120 --> 00:09:53,900

switcher. You weren't being disloyal or
untrue to yourself. So, so every year I

107

00:09:53,900 --> 00:09:55,920

went back because every year it was
on my

108

00:09:55,920 --> 00:10:03,329

mind. And, and um we had a, I had an
annual and annual meeting with the Dean

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00:10:03,329 --> 00:10:08,040

and I just brought it up every year with the Dean. I know, here I am again and

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00:10:08,040 --> 00:10:14,040

this is still an issue so. You know and they were saying things like oh we're

111

00:10:14,040 --> 00:10:17,490

trying to get our students to come and how do we get more students and if they

112

00:10:17,490 --> 00:10:26,310

were just culturally more um aware then they would get more students. So

113

00:10:26,310 --> 00:10:31,320

consequently, because of that, Wright State or Sinclair did start an Appalachian

114

00:10:31,320 --> 00:10:34,170

Studies program it's one of the only accredited programs in the state

115

00:10:34,170 --> 00:10:40,399

Appalachian studies. Other states have large Appalachian programs, but Ohio has

116

00:10:40,399 --> 00:10:46,889

20. It used to have 29. I think now we have 33 Appalachian counties. Um we're kind

117

00:10:46,889 --> 00:10:52,620

of like the invisible minority, because you can't look at us and tell you know that

118

00:10:52,620 --> 00:10:58,050

we are a different culture than the other folks who are also Caucasian. So

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00:10:58,050 --> 00:11:04,260

but also there are a lot of Appalachian African-Americans um and a lot of Native

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00:11:04,260 --> 00:11:09,510

American Appalachians. So it's just real interesting to find all these cultural

121

00:11:09,510 --> 00:11:13,829

similarities. Then REACH every year the first year was African-American and

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00:11:13,829 --> 00:11:18,029

Appalachian, then next year we added Latino, and then we added every year

123

00:11:18,029 --> 00:11:23,130

we've added. So now we include all ethnic groups and tried to bring to bring a

124

00:11:23,130 --> 00:11:28,350

little bit of everybody to the table each year. So this year we have a

125

00:11:28,350 --> 00:11:35,579

Japanese, um, Japanese American but he was born in Japan and raised in Japan. And he

126

00:11:35,579 --> 00:11:41,730

now lives in America. Um but he's going to speak about the internment camps um and how

127

00:11:41,730 --> 00:11:44,910

in that kind of reconciliation. This year's in the spirit of reconciliation.

128

00:11:44,910 --> 00:11:48,750

Every year it's in the spirit of and this year's in the spirit of reconciliation.

129

00:11:48,750 --> 00:11:54,810

And last year was in the spirit of going home because home is so important to

130

00:11:54,810 --> 00:12:00,480

everyone and so what does home mean to me. What does home mean to you and

131

00:12:00,480 --> 00:12:09,089

how can we share those thoughts and ideas so. Um you are ah also the driven

132

00:12:09,089 --> 00:12:18,440

force behind The Many Faces of the Dayton Photo Mural and Stories ah Project. Um I

133

00:12:18,440 --> 00:12:24,029

understand that this was a great collaboration of many people. Um tell me a

134

00:12:24,029 --> 00:12:28,290

little bit more about this project. Well REACH has as a component of REACH. We

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00:12:28,290 --> 00:12:33,060

have a studies conference. I felt like that that was really important. When your

136

00:12:33,060 --> 00:12:37,260

doing multiculturalism, there's reasons that multi, that's diversity programs

137

00:12:37,260 --> 00:12:39,930

haven't worked really well across the America. There's a reason that the

138

00:12:39,930 --> 00:12:46,529

multicultural prevalence have programs

have problems. Um they don't reach as far as

139

00:12:46,529 --> 00:12:48,990
they could reach, not that they have
problems, but they just aren't as

140

00:12:48,990 --> 00:12:53,790
encompassing as they could be. Was that I
felt it was important to talk about

141

00:12:53,790 --> 00:12:58,889
culture, because a lot of times you go to
the Greek Festival and you have baklava

142

00:12:58,889 --> 00:13:02,370
and you have and you watch them dance
and you and it's marvelous and you look

143

00:13:02,370 --> 00:13:05,459
at all this stuff and you and you feel
really part of it but I don't really

144

00:13:05,459 --> 00:13:10,410
talk to them and say what, what is your
belief what are your values what do you

145

00:13:10,410 --> 00:13:16,680
think about this or that. And I would go
to the African American you know day

146

00:13:16,680 --> 00:13:20,399
festival and and I would look at all
their wonderful things and eat the food

147

00:13:20,399 --> 00:13:23,490
and but I wouldn't know. So it was
important that we have a studies

148

00:13:23,490 --> 00:13:28,380
conference that we spend a day talking.
But we also have two art shows every year.

149
00:13:28,380 --> 00:13:31,260
We have a show at the Dayton Visual
Arts Center and we should have a show at

150
00:13:31,260 --> 00:13:35,790
Sinclair and we have a community art
project. Some years I come up with the

151
00:13:35,790 --> 00:13:39,600
ideas of what to do with the community
for the community art project. Some years

152
00:13:39,600 --> 00:13:42,839
other people come up with the ideas. But
we always have a group of wonderful

153
00:13:42,839 --> 00:13:52,560
volunteers and always willing to help
and we have Sinclair students and Dayton Visual Art volunteers and interns and the director of ah
and and the director of of dating the

154
00:13:52,560 --> 00:13:59,699
Dayton Visual Arts Center um and um who is now Jane Black, but Paula Recca was the director then and

155
00:13:59,699 --> 00:14:05,899
she helped get REACH started and so
did Bing Davis. Ah Bing Davis is a

156
00:14:05,899 --> 00:14:09,769
marvelous, marvelous artist and we've become very, very close

157
00:14:09,769 --> 00:14:14,779
friends. Family, you know, just very close
over the years. But he co-coordinates and

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00:14:14,779 --> 00:14:18,679

Jane Black co-coordinates REACH every year. But we come up with a community art

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00:14:18,679 --> 00:14:25,939

project. Many Faces of Dayton was an art project that we did I think um maybe three

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00:14:25,939 --> 00:14:30,860

years ago and that one I came up with that idea. And what we did was we went

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00:14:30,860 --> 00:14:35,899

out and we photographed about, I don't know, two or three thousand people's

162

00:14:35,899 --> 00:14:40,759

faces and we hung them. Um Kenny Stewart helped with that with the printing and

163

00:14:40,759 --> 00:14:45,079

doing this plastic overlays that we have that are transparencies. That's at

164

00:14:45,079 --> 00:14:50,869

Sinclair if you want to see it by the way in the basement. Um, um but it was I

165

00:14:50,869 --> 00:14:56,199

think was 29. I don't remember how many. It's too many. But there's... I think that there was

166

00:14:56,199 --> 00:15:02,959

that it was 29. 100 yeah. We did another project too that's on the front of

167

00:15:02,959 --> 00:15:07,970

Courthouse Square is a 48-foot long bronze. It's called a heritage sculpture.

168

00:15:07,970 --> 00:15:13,119

Mm-hmm. That piece, we raised a hundred thousand dollars to build that piece and um

169

00:15:13,119 --> 00:15:18,980

and 65 of it went for casting and bronze. It was built by volunteer labor. It was

170

00:15:18,980 --> 00:15:27,679

built from 95 to 1998. Um that was a marvelous, marvelous um collaboration. I had

171

00:15:27,679 --> 00:15:34,249

students who went out to um I think they went to like 35 festivals and community

172

00:15:34,249 --> 00:15:39,230

projects and got people to build small clay tiles and then they spent a year

173

00:15:39,230 --> 00:15:44,059

every Saturday for a year. We met and we put those clay tiles together and then

174

00:15:44,059 --> 00:15:48,649

we took it to Indianapolis and had it cast in bronze and it's now in the front

175

00:15:48,649 --> 00:15:53,990

of the stage at courthouse square. Um and that was another large community

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00:15:53,990 --> 00:15:58,220

sculpture that, that I was able to facilitate and come up with. We had the

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00:15:58,220 --> 00:16:04,910

boats, the boats for Dayton that hang permanently now and in Sinclair we have

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00:16:04,910 --> 00:16:09,019

a couple of quilts that we've done over the years. Just done lots of projects. We

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00:16:09,019 --> 00:16:12,860

had a project once that was called "Come to the Table." It was a 28-foot long table

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00:16:12,860 --> 00:16:18,829

and then people decorated a piece of pottery or a piece of a plate or a mug

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00:16:18,829 --> 00:16:23,139

or they brought something in that was special to them and we set the table and

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00:16:23,139 --> 00:16:28,120

then we had a meal at the table and that when we had the meal it was like four deep we

183

00:16:28,120 --> 00:16:32,170

had a everybody gathered around the table, the 28-foot table, and we had just

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00:16:32,170 --> 00:16:37,089

come to the table with a meal. People cried. It was so touching. We broke bread.

185

00:16:37,089 --> 00:16:41,800

What a buffet. We broke bread and we had this beautiful meal and we all shared on

186

00:16:41,800 --> 00:16:48,550

all these hand-done platters and cups and it was it was pretty cool. Anyhow, so

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00:16:48,550 --> 00:16:55,420

we've had lots and lots of projects. Um so um it's been fun. I like to do

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00:16:55,420 --> 00:16:59,500

collaborations. I like to do community projects. What I have found in my

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00:16:59,500 --> 00:17:05,589

experience over and over and over is people are not apathetic. People do care.

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00:17:05,589 --> 00:17:10,750

People want to be involved. They just don't know what to do. And if you suggest

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00:17:10,750 --> 00:17:14,169

something that's they think is worthwhile and they think that they're

192

00:17:14,169 --> 00:17:19,660

part of and that their respected and their voice counts, they will be glad to

193

00:17:19,660 --> 00:17:26,230

help and they will be glad to work and help and, and be energized and go out and get

194

00:17:26,230 --> 00:17:30,429

more people. Usually on these community projects, we have to turn people away. We

195

00:17:30,429 --> 00:17:35,970

don't have to go out and find more people. Um in fact on the Heritage Sculpture,

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00:17:35,970 --> 00:17:41,890

we had 48-foot worth of bronze or, you know, relief 48-foot long and

197

00:17:41,890 --> 00:17:45,100

we were running out of space on the stage.
It started out it was going to be 20

198

00:17:45,100 --> 00:17:49,510

foot and then it got 30 foot now it's 48
foot and then the Boy Scouts called and

199

00:17:49,510 --> 00:17:54,280

said we have 500 Boy Scouts can they
make a tile and I just said no. I can't. I

200

00:17:54,280 --> 00:18:01,030

can't. I'm so sorry. I apologize but so, so
it you know it's just it's just been

201

00:18:01,030 --> 00:18:05,830

marvelous. I'm doing a community project
right now, community art project, that's

202

00:18:05,830 --> 00:18:09,640

not connected with REACH, but for
Kettering for a Windsor Park in

203

00:18:09,640 --> 00:18:16,270

kettering right now. And we had 250
community members come this summer and

204

00:18:16,270 --> 00:18:20,980

and draw their hand and make a symbol
within their hand and that piece is

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00:18:20,980 --> 00:18:27,430

going to be dedicated May 14. So it's
called the Friendship Arch and um,

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00:18:27,430 --> 00:18:31,630

I don't know, they're just fun. It was, it was in fact we only advertised in their

207

00:18:31,630 --> 00:18:34,780

neighborhood. We didn't go out because we were afraid we were going to get a

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00:18:34,780 --> 00:18:39,160

thousand hands and we didn't have enough room. We only had enough room for, you

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00:18:39,160 --> 00:18:45,040

know, a couple hundred. So, so it's, it's not been an issue. People, people being

210

00:18:45,040 --> 00:18:51,970

involved. People are happy to be involved and I feel so blessed and and I've made

211

00:18:51,970 --> 00:18:55,840

so many friends of my life is so much richer because the work the community

212

00:18:55,840 --> 00:19:09,160

work that I do. I mean, I am a wealthy, wealthy woman because of my, not money, at all, but, but friends. You know rock I've got there they feel like rocks

213

00:19:09,160 --> 00:19:13,900

their my anchors. You know, all these people who just have touched my life in

214

00:19:13,900 --> 00:19:19,780

so many wonderful ways just because, you know, you try something or you do

215

00:19:19,780 --> 00:19:28,450

something or you talk to someone. It's pretty wonderful. Um, let's talk about the um

216

00:19:28,450 --> 00:19:35,320

Unity Puzzle. Haha! Yeah. Um, that was committed for commission for the Martin

217

00:19:35,320 --> 00:19:44,470

Luther Day King Committee and um you mentioned um Mr. Davis. Yeah. He was in partnership

218

00:19:44,470 --> 00:19:52,840

with this. Yes. Um now how was that project conceived. Well, Bing called me

219

00:19:52,840 --> 00:19:56,290

and said, Tess, we need to do something for the Martin Luther King

220

00:19:56,290 --> 00:20:03,640

March which we were going to but, but every year attending. But we wanted

221

00:20:03,640 --> 00:20:07,150

something that symbolizes the coming together of Dayton. So he and I got

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00:20:07,150 --> 00:20:11,890

together and brainstormed and we came up with this idea of putting the four

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00:20:11,890 --> 00:20:15,640

pieces together because it was tradition in Dayton that the people marched from

224

00:20:15,640 --> 00:20:20,440

the four corners of Dayton north-south Ethan, north, south, east and west. So we

225

00:20:20,440 --> 00:20:23,710

came up with you and I don't know we but we just came up with the idea of a

226

00:20:23,710 --> 00:20:30,790

puzzle. And, and it was important that the rivers be on the puzzle because the

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00:20:30,790 --> 00:20:35,650

the thing that the reason that people settled here was because of the rivers.

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00:20:35,650 --> 00:20:40,790

Um, um, you know the Stillwater, the Mad, the Miami, the Wolf Creek and there's one

229

00:20:40,790 --> 00:20:45,590

other one. /that they all came together and that's the reason Dayton was located

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00:20:45,590 --> 00:20:53,000

where it's located. So we did this puzzle and we outlined the county, Montgomery

231

00:20:53,000 --> 00:20:57,230

County. And we have the rivers and then we cut it into four pieces of puzzle

232

00:20:57,230 --> 00:21:02,660

pieces and then we, we each year we would and students painted it in fact we did

233

00:21:02,660 --> 00:21:08,360

that in Bing's studio. We painted it and then each year I get about 10 or 15

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00:21:08,360 --> 00:21:16,030

students to volunteer and we take the puzzle out to the locations and we have

235

00:21:16,030 --> 00:21:21,740

my technician built, my woodshop technician, built a stand rolling cart

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00:21:21,740 --> 00:21:26,270

because the first year we carried it and it was just too heavy. Plus we've gotten

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00:21:26,270 --> 00:21:31,670

older over the years. Anyway and so this puzzle, this puzzle is up on this stick

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00:21:31,670 --> 00:21:36,230

and you push it on the cart and then in the middle of Dayton where they the

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00:21:36,230 --> 00:21:39,980

four corners, the four sections of Dayton comes together, they put the puzzle

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00:21:39,980 --> 00:21:43,460

together. The students put the puzzle, Bing and I and all the students put

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00:21:43,460 --> 00:21:47,000

the puzzle together every year and we carry it up on the stage and set it up.

242

00:21:47,000 --> 00:21:53,060

That's a symbol of coming together of Dayton. Um it's, it's, it's neat. It's, I

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00:21:53,060 --> 00:21:57,710

don't know, student, I always have I always have plenty volunteers for the

244

00:21:57,710 --> 00:22:01,700

Unity Puzzle. You know, every year they'll say, Okay Tess. Its January. They'll call.

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00:22:01,700 --> 00:22:09,860

Is it time? You know so.... But we've done

that for a long time. So it's been going

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00:22:09,860 --> 00:22:15,650

on for a while. For a while. I think 94
maybe 95. I don't, don't know. It all

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00:22:15,650 --> 00:22:23,460

runs together. But yeah, several, yeah many years. Um

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00:22:23,460 --> 00:22:29,730

in 2000 and you were involved
and the spirit of two [inaudible]. The

249

00:22:29,730 --> 00:22:33,600

spirit of what? The [inaudible]. Oh

250

00:22:33,600 --> 00:22:43,490

yeah. Um how do you feel uh that the
Hispanic community in Dayton um is

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00:22:43,490 --> 00:22:51,929

contributing um to what Dayton is today too. Well I think it's exciting. It's really

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00:22:51,929 --> 00:22:59,690

interesting for me to see this the
Spanish people move into dayton and

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00:22:59,690 --> 00:23:07,409

what's interesting and what's really
encouraging for me is it seems that that

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00:23:07,409 --> 00:23:11,520

that the families as they come in
they're not settling in one enclave.

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00:23:11,520 --> 00:23:17,789

They're not settling. We have a lot of um
hispanic or Latino. And I and folks have

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00:23:17,789 --> 00:23:21,120

corrected me. Sometimes I'll say Hispanic
They say no it's in a Latina and

257

00:23:21,120 --> 00:23:24,659

I'll say Latino and somebody will say no
I'm Hispanic so I always get confused

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00:23:24,659 --> 00:23:34,380

anyway. So but, but a large influx into
the into the east Dayton. There's also

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00:23:34,380 --> 00:23:38,429

African Americans who have moved into
east Dayton today. So east Dayton is not

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00:23:38,429 --> 00:23:46,470

predominantly Appalachian anymore.
Fairborn now has um um a larger population of

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00:23:46,470 --> 00:23:54,659

African Americans. We don't have many
Latinos or Hispanic um folks. Um, but um it was

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00:23:54,659 --> 00:24:00,990

encouraging when I read that, that
they weren't being kind of trapped in

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00:24:00,990 --> 00:24:06,899

enclaves little ghettos or little
sections that it's more disperse. Um because

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00:24:06,899 --> 00:24:14,190

i grew up in an area that was absolutely
totally all Appalachian. You know, I found

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00:24:14,190 --> 00:24:17,730

out I was different when I started school. I didn't know, I thought everybody

266

00:24:17,730 --> 00:24:23,010

was just like us because all of our friends and neighbors and families you

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00:24:23,010 --> 00:24:30,779

know neighborhood was. So, so but I think they're contributing a lot. I also think

268

00:24:30,779 --> 00:24:36,940

that the lot of, a lot of the Spanish-speaking cultures are a lot has a lot

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00:24:36,940 --> 00:24:39,940

more similarities with the Appalachian and the African Americans than it does

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00:24:39,940 --> 00:24:44,140

with mainstream. Because I feel like that they, they also have the love for family.

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00:24:44,140 --> 00:24:49,420

They also have loyalty. You know and they also very independent. All those things

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00:24:49,420 --> 00:24:58,720

that, that people who come from a rural culture, you know, they're, they're, um I don't,

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00:24:58,720 --> 00:25:06,460

what do you call it. Um, polychromatic instead of monochromatic. We interrupt we

274

00:25:06,460 --> 00:25:12,300

talk over people, you know, and that the, that's the Spanish culture does that too.

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00:25:12,300 --> 00:25:19,510

Um it's really hard for me not to interrupt even though I know that it's improper in

276

00:25:19,510 --> 00:25:34,330

a, in a mainstream culture, Because in my family, we just, everybody talks at once, you know So, so um you know so it is important,

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00:25:34,330 --> 00:25:42,280

religion is important, families are important all those things that that um that that define a rural culture or

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00:25:42,280 --> 00:25:51,420

define, define, you know. Those three cultures are very very similar. So, so

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00:25:51,420 --> 00:26:02,010

they fit right in, I don't know. Um, that the problem is this we're not getting enough

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00:26:02,370 --> 00:26:06,510

students in our schools. Um

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00:26:08,790 --> 00:26:12,750

you know we still have those kind of barriers. We're not sending, we're not

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00:26:12,750 --> 00:26:17,100

getting enough. We're not reaching our hispanic or Latino populations and

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00:26:17,100 --> 00:26:23,330

getting them into college. Um, I have some friends who are working very hard with that

284

00:26:23,330 --> 00:26:30,630

Alicia Pagan. Do you know her? Marvelous lady. She teaches at Trotwood High School

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00:26:30,630 --> 00:26:35,850

and she's very active. But, um, you know I have some friends in the community

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00:26:35,850 --> 00:26:43,260

working very, very hard to bring in and because you know at this point in time I

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00:26:43,260 --> 00:26:51,720

think that they're generate that they're migrating into Dayton and then, then

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00:26:51,720 --> 00:26:55,680

there will be a, you know, the young people then will grow and go into the

289

00:26:55,680 --> 00:27:01,800

colleges and go you know. As my parents came in, none of my parents in that group

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00:27:01,800 --> 00:27:05,970

went to college. You know, it was their children and their grandchildren that

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00:27:05,970 --> 00:27:12,870

assimilate or not assimilate but learn how to make it and learn how to to work

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00:27:12,870 --> 00:27:18,630

within the framework that we have to do in order to earn a living. Have a, you

293

00:27:18,630 --> 00:27:27,930

know, respectable life. Pay the bills. Mm-hmm. What are the most interesting or

294

00:27:27,930 --> 00:27:35,250

compelling programs or events that you have been involved in and why. Mercy that's a

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00:27:35,250 --> 00:27:43,200

big question. I've just been very blessed. It's been a lot of events. I don't know. I

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00:27:43,200 --> 00:27:49,080

have to think. I mean, that I've been involved with? Which one have you had the

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00:27:49,080 --> 00:27:56,070

most fun with. Well you know what's really cool at this point my life I only do the

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00:27:56,070 --> 00:28:04,710

things I want to do to have the fun with. Uh, I enjoy doing REACH. It's a lot of hard

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00:28:04,710 --> 00:28:10,560

work. Its enormous work. In fact a friend said to me ah well my chairperson at

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00:28:10,560 --> 00:28:12,960

Sinclair said to me, Tess it's like you're putting on this huge wedding

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00:28:12,960 --> 00:28:19,020

every year. You know, wedding for 300. I mean with, you know, 20 brides because you

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00:28:19,020 --> 00:28:22,630

have all these speakers. Uh, it's rewarding

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00:28:22,630 --> 00:28:25,950

I mean it really has changed my life. Um, um.

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00:28:27,840 --> 00:28:35,650

It's been phenomenal. Um, I also worked with the folk artists in Kentucky and who are

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00:28:35,650 --> 00:28:40,150
my people and that has been an
incredibly wonderful thing that has

306

00:28:40,150 --> 00:28:48,640
happened every year that I cherish
immensely and and I find very rewarding.

307

00:28:48,640 --> 00:28:58,420
It turns out that I'm an artist and um when
I was growing up since we had... My parents

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00:28:58,420 --> 00:29:04,000
had moved here we had lost, I had lost
track with my people and so I was

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00:29:04,000 --> 00:29:09,940
teaching art appreciation at Sinclair. No
art history and um I was teaching a

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00:29:09,940 --> 00:29:16,390
section on folk art. And I had a student
who went to Kentucky and did a report on

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00:29:16,390 --> 00:29:22,960
a Tolson. And he came back and said
there's going to be an art show. There's

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00:29:22,960 --> 00:29:27,160
a real famous folk artist and in Eastern
Kentucky and I said we'll find out who I

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00:29:27,160 --> 00:29:31,180
would love to know and he came back and
he said Tess it's Minnie Adkins and it's

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00:29:31,180 --> 00:29:35,560
going to be in Isonville. And I said
Minnie Adkins is my cousin and she is not

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00:29:35,560 --> 00:29:40,360
a folk artist. She's not an artist. I've
known her all my life. Well it turns out

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00:29:40,360 --> 00:29:47,170
that I had known her, but I was a child.
She's ten years my senior. So I didn't

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00:29:47,170 --> 00:29:53,440
know that she carved and turned out we
went and she is a nationally known folk

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00:29:53,440 --> 00:29:58,510
artist. I got acquainted with her. So art
was the vehicle that allowed me to get

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00:29:58,510 --> 00:30:02,170
acquainted with my people. It turns out I
have a lot of cousins who are also

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00:30:02,170 --> 00:30:07,600
artists their folk artists. So Minnie is a
whit carver, and Tim Lewis is a, is a

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00:30:07,600 --> 00:30:14,410
stone carver, and then Jim Lewis is a
carver and we have. So ,so that's been one

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00:30:14,410 --> 00:30:19,120
of the absolute delights and most
cherished things of my life to find all

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00:30:19,120 --> 00:30:25,810
these cousins who are also artists and
who make art and I, I travel back and

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00:30:25,810 --> 00:30:30,670

forth between Kentucky and Ohio. Minnie and I do about 30 pots a year together. I

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00:30:30,670 --> 00:30:35,860

make the clay. I'm not a potter. I'm a sculptor. But for once a year I make

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00:30:35,860 --> 00:30:41,080

these pots and I take them down there and she paints. She glazes them and then

327

00:30:41,080 --> 00:30:45,309

I bring them back and fry them in my kiln and we go to this big folk art show

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00:30:45,309 --> 00:30:49,929

at Morehead, Kentucky. And the collectors come in from all over the United States

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00:30:49,929 --> 00:30:54,520

and buy those pots. So it's pretty cool and she has of course her wood carvings

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00:30:54,520 --> 00:30:58,690

and all of that. So that's been a very cherished thing. I wouldn't have found that

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00:30:58,690 --> 00:31:04,750

had I not been doing REACH and had not... Finding out who I was and and exploring

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00:31:04,750 --> 00:31:10,260

all this has really helped me to find myself and make myself comfortable. And

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00:31:10,260 --> 00:31:15,910

fit. I fit there and fit here. You know, I

fit anywhere now, but it took a long time

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00:31:15,910 --> 00:31:22,450

getting there. So I think, and Martin Luther King is a huge wonderful thing

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00:31:22,450 --> 00:31:26,710

that we do every year. I mean, I don't know, I'm just I'm just blessed. I mean, I

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00:31:26,710 --> 00:31:32,620

have all these things that I do that I love so. But I would say that the day in

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00:31:32,620 --> 00:31:38,020

the country with the folk artist and then, then, REACH, and, and Martin Luther

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00:31:38,020 --> 00:31:44,500

King are my three favorite things I do each year. That's enough. That's enough. It makes me

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00:31:44,500 --> 00:31:52,710

tired to think about it. Oh. Um, what are some of the obstacles or frustrations,

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00:31:52,710 --> 00:32:00,330

disappointments, or challenges that you have faced in your community work.

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00:32:03,030 --> 00:32:07,640

Well I think perseverance is the key. You just keep trying over and over and over.

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00:32:07,640 --> 00:32:13,180

Education is the key. Um, the broken, you know, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, you

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00:32:13,680 --> 00:32:28,670

know. Um. Okay and we're back again. Um and you have served as the president of

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00:32:28,670 --> 00:32:34,770

Fairborn City Schools and you're presently the present, the vice

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00:32:34,770 --> 00:32:43,140

president. Correct. Um, what do you feel is the most lacking in Fairborn or even

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00:32:43,140 --> 00:32:53,850

the Dayton educational system. Money. Money, money, money! Oh my word. Oh it's so

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00:32:53,850 --> 00:33:04,890

sad. Sad, sad. Um, we have and we have so many poor kids who don't have food in

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00:33:04,890 --> 00:33:09,030

both, in both, Fairborn and Dayton, but in all over you know. But the whole

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00:33:09,030 --> 00:33:14,280

educational system and in America is needs to be totally readjusted and

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00:33:14,280 --> 00:33:23,310

totally, totally, refurbished and taken seriously and respected. There's just so

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00:33:23,310 --> 00:33:28,020

many things wrong. Um, we have a lot of really hard working people in Fairborn

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00:33:28,020 --> 00:33:33,270

and in in all our school systems across America. People generally, the good, we

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00:33:33,270 --> 00:33:39,060

have fabulous teachers. Um, Fairborn is working very hard. I'm very proud of our,

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00:33:39,060 --> 00:33:42,960

our school and very proud of our teachers. But if we don't pass a levy in

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00:33:42,960 --> 00:33:46,980

May, we're going to go bankrupt. The state's going to take us over. We can't

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00:33:46,980 --> 00:33:54,150

cut enough to, to make it without levies and the population does not understand

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00:33:54,150 --> 00:34:00,750

that. And so we go out and we fight and argue and persuade and try our best to

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00:34:00,750 --> 00:34:08,100

get money and we have aging buildings. Um, Um, so we need new schools in Fairborn, but we'd

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00:34:08,100 --> 00:34:12,000

have to pass a huge bond levy. Well we're not going to pass it. I mean, the chance

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00:34:12,000 --> 00:34:14,870

of the passing and operating levy and then passing

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00:34:14,870 --> 00:34:19,880

a bond levy, then another operating levy. The people can't. The times are too

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00:34:19,880 --> 00:34:23,720

tough for people to afford all that. So we are going to try our very best to

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00:34:23,720 --> 00:34:29,570

pass an operating levy in May. Um, the problem is, is I think so many schools in

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00:34:29,570 --> 00:34:33,650

the state of Ohio are in the same position that we're in, that the state's

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00:34:33,650 --> 00:34:36,710

going to have this plethora of schools that are not going to have any money and

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00:34:36,710 --> 00:34:41,690

how can the state. The state's not set up to come in and run that many schools. So

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00:34:41,690 --> 00:34:44,300

they're going to have to come up with something else. I don't know, but we're

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00:34:44,300 --> 00:34:50,180

facing a crisis in our school system in America in Ohio and in in the Miami

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00:34:50,180 --> 00:34:54,880

Valley. And it's just a really sad thing. It doesn't have to be that way, you know.

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00:34:54,880 --> 00:34:56,560

So, um, I don't know. I got on the school board to try to help make, make education

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00:35:03,710 --> 00:35:08,120

better. Fairborn was in a, in a kind of a bad time at the point that I got on it.

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00:35:08,120 --> 00:35:11,780

My grandson was started kindergarten and I just couldn't stand it. It's just like

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00:35:11,780 --> 00:35:16,220

somebody's got to do something I guess I'll have to try to step up. And I've

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00:35:16,220 --> 00:35:21,200

been elected twice. I'll have to run again this fall for the next election

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00:35:21,200 --> 00:35:25,850

which I plan to do because I really like it and I feel like I am making a

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00:35:25,850 --> 00:35:30,860

difference. I can make a difference and I can be the voice for the community and I

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00:35:30,860 --> 00:35:34,670

can be the voice for the teachers and for the students. And that's really,

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00:35:34,670 --> 00:35:38,570

that's really helpful and really good. We put in a lot of good programs in

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00:35:38,570 --> 00:35:45,320

Fairborn. I'm really proud of our all-day kindergarten program. Um, um, we have, we feed our

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00:35:45,320 --> 00:35:51,620

children lunch and breakfast. Every child in our school K through or preschool

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00:35:51,620 --> 00:35:56,180

through eighth grade gets a free breakfast. We have a backpack program

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00:35:56,180 --> 00:36:00,010

where we send food home on the weekends for our kids who don't have food at home.

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00:36:00,010 --> 00:36:04,400

It's through, through, Title 1, through grants. It's not coming out over

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00:36:04,400 --> 00:36:12,650

operating budget. Um, we have something we called, um, I can't think of it right now

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00:36:12,650 --> 00:36:16,490

but it's for freshman's, freshman high schoolers, that we can come in and teach

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00:36:16,490 --> 00:36:21,230

them how to be a high school student and teach them how to study. Teach them some

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00:36:21,230 --> 00:36:24,960

college prep and some readiness and, Freshman Focus, and

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00:36:24,960 --> 00:36:29,250

that program has really helped our dropout rate in Fairborn. Um, of course,

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00:36:29,250 --> 00:36:32,250

we have a STEM program--science, technology, engineering, and math program--

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00:36:32,250 --> 00:36:38,400

in both, both math and biomedical sciences at Fairborn. So that's a really

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00:36:38,400 --> 00:36:44,190

wonderful thing. Ah, we do not have art, K through, K through a sixth grade which is

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00:36:44,190 --> 00:36:48,750

a tragedy. You know, we really need the arts. We can't afford the art teachers. We

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00:36:48,750 --> 00:36:53,490

don't have librarians. We let our librarians go years ago. We have one main

394

00:36:53,490 --> 00:36:59,310

librarian in the whole school system. So you know, there's a, we have one tech person

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00:36:59,310 --> 00:37:04,619

for five schools. You know, how do you run all these technology things that you're

396

00:37:04,619 --> 00:37:08,790

supposed to be teaching when you can't afford to hire a tech person or one or

397

00:37:08,790 --> 00:37:12,750

one per school. We have one person for the whole school system. It's, it's really

398

00:37:12,750 --> 00:37:17,250

a sad... So teachers have had to step up and when teachers have but it's a sad

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00:37:17,250 --> 00:37:22,080

situation in that in that we don't have, we don't have the things that we really

400

00:37:22,080 --> 00:37:33,330

need to give our kids a stellar education. But our, we, the teachers have rose to the occasion and done a lot of innovation and we are now effective.

401

00:37:33,330 --> 00:37:37,589

We have one school that's excellent and we are expecting to get to excellent. You

402

00:37:37,589 --> 00:37:44,220

know, it's a Fairborn has 51-percent of Fairborn is rental and about fifty,

403

00:37:44,220 --> 00:37:49,530

52 percent of our children live in poverty, below the poverty line. But

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00:37:49,530 --> 00:37:53,160

just because you're poor, doesn't mean you can't make good grades and you can't,

405

00:37:53,160 --> 00:37:58,410

you can't excel and that's what we're teaching our kids. We have something

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00:37:58,410 --> 00:38:04,619

called, No Excuses University, so every teacher in every classroom focuses on

407

00:38:04,619 --> 00:38:09,150

the college they went to when they were in, when they were going to school and

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00:38:09,150 --> 00:38:13,109

they teach that child how to go to college. My granddaughter, one

409

00:38:13,109 --> 00:38:17,460

granddaughter, is doing Miami. She's in second grade and she knows a ton of

410

00:38:17,460 --> 00:38:22,140

stuff about Miami University and she's thrilled and she would like to go to

411

00:38:22,140 --> 00:38:27,780

Miami. You know and so just to teach the kids that yes, dream, you can be somebody.

412

00:38:27,780 --> 00:38:34,789

You can do it. You can, you can, you can excel. So, so we've put in a lot. A whole

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00:38:34,789 --> 00:38:38,900

group of us. We've worked as a collaboration. A group of people coming

414

00:38:38,900 --> 00:38:42,890

up with the best ideas that we, we can come up with and it's it's been very

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00:38:42,890 --> 00:38:47,799

good. So last six years have been excellent. Much, much better for Fairborn.

416

00:38:47,799 --> 00:38:54,640

Why don't we let the cat in if that's okay?

417

00:38:56,109 --> 00:39:04,069

Come on Katie Bella. That's a good girl. You, ah, mentioned, you mentioned a minute, a

418

00:39:04,069 --> 00:39:12,109

moment ago the tragedy of that there is no art in, in school and I think that one

419

00:39:12,109 --> 00:39:18,140

of the biggest misconception about art is that art is easy. When art is not

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00:39:18,140 --> 00:39:25,669

really easy and I actually think that art actually teaches the creative

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00:39:25,669 --> 00:39:33,619

process within students that could help them achieve anything. Why do you think

422

00:39:33,619 --> 00:39:41,679

that, um, that it's so hard for the government and the general population to

423

00:39:41,679 --> 00:39:47,689

understand the importance that art really brings in, um, in the life of a

424

00:39:47,689 --> 00:39:55,189

student. Well that's a, I have a lot of thoughts on that. A lot of thoughts. In

425

00:39:55,189 --> 00:40:02,509

our culture in our American culture, time is money. We are producers of things. Um, the

426

00:40:02,509 --> 00:40:07,509

more gadget's and gadgets and things that you can buy. We're very materialistic. And

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00:40:07,509 --> 00:40:12,140

we are teaching our students, we are training our students to go out and be

428

00:40:12,140 --> 00:40:17,089

producers of things. The things that are the soft things. The things that are

429

00:40:17,089 --> 00:40:21,739

round out the person--the liberal arts education, the humanities, the arts, the music,

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00:40:21,739 --> 00:40:25,969

the dance. All of that gets left behind,
because they develop the person. They

431

00:40:25,969 --> 00:40:29,947

round the person. They make the person
whole. And because you can't see it, it's

432

00:40:32,599 --> 00:40:39,019

not a thing. Then, therefore it's not as
"valid" within our culture. The problem is

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00:40:39,019 --> 00:40:43,099

it's a great fallacy, because cultures
that do not reward the Arts and do not

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00:40:43,099 --> 00:40:46,890

promote the arts are dying cultures.
They're not living cultures. You have to

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00:40:46,890 --> 00:40:53,250

expand and be creative. And in order to
teach a child to be a whole, to be

436

00:40:53,250 --> 00:41:00,119

creative, to expand, and to build, to build
great things and to innovate and to, to de

437

00:41:00,119 --> 00:41:06,240

score discover and explore, they need the
art. Okay, we are back at is February 27,

438

00:41:06,240 --> 00:41:13,920

and we are continuing with our interview,
ah, with Tess Little. Today I want to

439

00:41:13,920 --> 00:41:20,010

be able to interview her about her
artwork. Um, last time I had an opportunity

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00:41:20,010 --> 00:41:26,309

to see some of her artwork. And, um, so that's why I'm really interested today and in

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00:41:26,309 --> 00:41:34,529

addressing that. Um, first of all I might ask you. "Why sculpture?" Well, I love to make

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00:41:34,529 --> 00:41:39,750

things, and I like to make things three-dimensional. It just seems to fit

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00:41:39,750 --> 00:41:45,839

my, my personality, my need to create. I like to make all kinds of art. Don't,

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00:41:45,839 --> 00:41:51,779

sculpture's just my first love--my passion. But I like to do pottery and I like to

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00:41:51,779 --> 00:41:57,450

do photography and other things too. It's not all sculpture, but most of it. It just

446

00:41:57,450 --> 00:42:04,079

seems that that's how I express my ideas best and I try to use whatever medium

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00:42:04,079 --> 00:42:10,109

that I need to use to express that idea. So whether it be clay or wood or plaster,

448

00:42:10,109 --> 00:42:17,579

steel, I try to use the material that it best expresses the concept of the

449

00:42:17,579 --> 00:42:24,779

idea of the art. Okay, um, one of the repetitive themes that I kind of saw

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00:42:24,779 --> 00:42:31,799

last time that we were here was
that you integrate the theme of the

451

00:42:31,799 --> 00:42:37,200

hands a lot. That just happens to be the
series I'm working on currently, but it's

452

00:42:37,200 --> 00:42:41,359

fairly new maybe in the last five years.

453

00:42:41,420 --> 00:42:44,880

Artists work in series, and they work in
themes.

454

00:42:44,880 --> 00:42:49,529

And so, um, and your art changes over time
and I've been making art for a long time.

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00:42:49,529 --> 00:42:53,130

So I've done lots of different series
and different themes. And currently I'm

456

00:42:53,130 --> 00:42:57,839

working on hands, because it just seems
like the hands is a personal expression.

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00:42:57,839 --> 00:43:04,619

You know you have the portrait and you
have the.... You know, what is the signature

458

00:43:04,619 --> 00:43:09,059

of the person. What shows the personality
the person, and it just seems like

459

00:43:09,059 --> 00:43:14,099

hands are a good way of showing people

coming together and of showing

460

00:43:14,099 --> 00:43:20,609

personality without showing the person.
It shows the humanity. So I think they're

461

00:43:20,609 --> 00:43:25,950

just a really good symbol of bringing
people together. It's rather

462

00:43:25,950 --> 00:43:32,279

cliche, but, but I try to do them in such
a way that it's not cliché. I noticed

463

00:43:32,279 --> 00:43:38,250

that you had some in some of them you
had other like sculptures within. You had

464

00:43:38,250 --> 00:43:46,619

the turtles. You had, so is that in, um,
representing, um, something in particular for

465

00:43:46,619 --> 00:43:52,289

each one. Well that's a community piece
that I'm doing. Now what I did for that

466

00:43:52,289 --> 00:44:00,089

piece was for Wenzler Park in Kettering.
Um, it's on Lincoln Park Boulevard in Kettering

467

00:44:00,089 --> 00:44:06,299

and it's a community art piece. And I had
a 150 community members

468

00:44:06,299 --> 00:44:10,470

come in and draw their hands. So that
each hand is a little different. It's all

469

00:44:10,470 --> 00:44:14,369
similar, but it's a little different. You
know, different sizes, a little bit

470
00:44:14,369 --> 00:44:19,980
different shapes. Yet, yet it speaks to
the universality of all of us. You know,

471
00:44:19,980 --> 00:44:24,930
they all have five fingers, you know,
or a thumb and four fingers. But, but then

472
00:44:24,930 --> 00:44:29,460
I had each person draw a symbol that
represented something about them and so

473
00:44:29,460 --> 00:44:32,910
they choose the, they chose those
symbols. I didn't choose the symbols that

474
00:44:32,910 --> 00:44:38,339
are inside the hands. That was uniquely
personal to them. So the, the series that

475
00:44:38,340 --> 00:44:40,890
I'm working on or the piece that I'm
working on which is called the

476
00:44:40,890 --> 00:44:52,300
Friendship Arch. It's an arch--a 16 foot
arch by 12 foot. It has a 150 hands on it. Then I have a 140 children's hands that are

477
00:44:52,300 --> 00:44:55,780
going to be on two benches, because their
hands are too small to be up on an arch

478
00:44:55,780 --> 00:45:01,780
16 foot from the ground. But they all chose
their personal symbol. And so

479

00:45:01,780 --> 00:45:07,810

everyone is different. So that was actually not my, not my choice--a turtle

480

00:45:07,810 --> 00:45:11,260

or a.... You know, there's all kinds of symbols--hearts and crosses and money

481

00:45:11,260 --> 00:45:16,630

signs and TVs and horses and dogs and cats and all kinds of symbols, but they

482

00:45:16,630 --> 00:45:22,260

chose that symbol. That's cut out of the hand. Then those hands that they drew are

483

00:45:22,260 --> 00:45:31,300

will be cut out of steel and then they will be used in the art piece. Um, which

484

00:45:31,300 --> 00:45:39,340

do you feel is the most compelling, your most compelling piece of artwork. Uh, maybe

485

00:45:39,340 --> 00:45:44,020

Filled by Spirit. Filled by Spirit was a installation piece that I did last

486

00:45:44,020 --> 00:45:58,060

year. It was a eight-foot tall by 12 foot by maybe 14 foot room that I built out

487

00:45:58,060 --> 00:46:03,970

of saplings. My husband and I built this room out of these 40 saplings, and it had

488

00:46:03,970 --> 00:46:10,180

a 186 six pots. They were
pinch pots. They were all pinch pots.

489

00:46:10,180 --> 00:46:14,470
There were all different shapes and
different sizes. They hung and those

490

00:46:14,470 --> 00:46:19,930
in that room full of these tree limbs
and you could walk through it. So it was

491

00:46:19,930 --> 00:46:25,540
as if every pot was a vessel and they
were and it was like every pot was a

492

00:46:25,540 --> 00:46:31,090
human, a human vessel and it was waiting
to be filled by the spirit. So I think

493

00:46:31,090 --> 00:46:41,050
that was a compelling piece. Um, I would
like to go to your your gallery in a

494

00:46:41,050 --> 00:46:46,750
second to kind of tape this, but I would
like for you to tell me a little bit

495

00:46:46,750 --> 00:46:52,720
more about that sculpture that you have
in your gallery that has this lady with

496

00:46:52,720 --> 00:46:59,020
the tongue out and someone's running on.
We are in

497

00:46:59,020 --> 00:47:04,300
the studio and can you explain to us a
little bit about. Well this is the

498

00:47:04,300 --> 00:47:08,980

gallery--an art gallery, and this is a combination of my work and the work of

499

00:47:08,980 --> 00:47:13,360

Bob Coates, who is my art partner, and he and I showed together a lot. A lot of

500

00:47:13,360 --> 00:47:17,620

times sculptors show together simply because it's too heavy to do it by

501

00:47:17,620 --> 00:47:21,970

yourself so we team up, we partner up. And we've been, we've been working together

502

00:47:21,970 --> 00:47:28,450

for about 10 or 12 years so it's a long-term partnership. But these, this

503

00:47:28,450 --> 00:47:34,120

gallery is our, um, this is where we store our work. We show things here. We have

504

00:47:34,120 --> 00:47:37,870

people come by appointment, but then we will take things from here to our art

505

00:47:37,870 --> 00:47:48,190

exhibitions. And one of the pieces that I would like you to explain is this one

506

00:47:48,190 --> 00:47:54,270

here that I saw the last time and I thought it was really compelling. I love

507

00:47:54,270 --> 00:48:01,330

the person just kind of running out on

the tongue so can you please tell us.

508

00:48:01,330 --> 00:48:07,780

Yeah. The title and um and explain a little bit about it. Sure. This is

509

00:48:07,780 --> 00:48:12,430

basically kind of a self-portrait perhaps, and it's called the Long Journey

510

00:48:12,430 --> 00:48:17,590

or the Long Story. And, ah, what she's doing is she's telling the story of her life.

511

00:48:17,590 --> 00:48:24,850

This is, this is my projection of me going out into the world and seeking

512

00:48:24,850 --> 00:48:32,590

adventure and doing all these different things. And, um, so, so, um, the tongue. She's speaking.

513

00:48:32,590 --> 00:48:36,970

She's speaking the story. She's telling the story. So it's called the Long Journey

514

00:48:36,970 --> 00:48:41,500

or the Long Story. And I feel like life is a journey, and it's a story. Every

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00:48:41,500 --> 00:48:46,570

person has a story. So, that was what I did. I created this in bronze and then I

516

00:48:46,570 --> 00:48:54,550

I created the little person and then the tongue and then the bust. And I welded

517

00:48:54,550 --> 00:49:00,580
the tongue into it and then the person
is welded on as well. So, um, so that's this

518
00:49:00,580 --> 00:49:08,830
piece. Okay. Um and I'm going to move on
to this side over here. Okay. Because your

519
00:49:08,830 --> 00:49:13,480
totem poles intrigue me as well
and I would like for you to talk a

520
00:49:13,480 --> 00:49:17,260
little bit about that. Sure. I've been
doing a series of totems. I really love

521
00:49:17,260 --> 00:49:22,630
totems. I love the stacking. I love the
different materials. I love to combine

522
00:49:22,630 --> 00:49:32,530
found objects. Um, so the totem are, and I
love old wood. Um, so, so the barn beams, the

523
00:49:32,530 --> 00:49:38,920
cherry, and then this is clay. Um, they remind me of human beings and that human spirit. Um,

524
00:49:38,920 --> 00:49:45,609
and they take on this personality of
their own. This one is clay, brass and

525
00:49:45,609 --> 00:49:54,900
steel. Ah, this one has a clay piece. Ah, so, um, they seem like people to me. Like individuals

526
00:49:54,900 --> 00:50:01,059
that have their own kind of spiritual
identity. So I often work in threes. I

527

00:50:01,059 --> 00:50:06,520
like to work in threes and fives and
sevens. Um, I just like the balance very much.

528
00:50:06,520 --> 00:50:15,640
So that's what the totems are. And then, um, I have another piece that I liked from

529
00:50:15,640 --> 00:50:20,740
last time that we were here was this one
that is back here. This little wood piece?

530
00:50:20,740 --> 00:50:27,099
Yes. I've did this very long ago. This is
probably 30 years old. Um, I was learning

531
00:50:27,099 --> 00:50:32,770
to carve wood and I like the biomorphic
shapes. I love this and I was really

532
00:50:32,770 --> 00:50:38,220
working on this negative face. This
negative shape in here and making that

533
00:50:38,220 --> 00:50:46,329
exciting and interesting. So it was just two
pieces of wood. They were. it was a box

534
00:50:46,329 --> 00:50:53,589
that I found and I took apart the box
and used the two side pieces. So it's

535
00:50:53,589 --> 00:51:00,700
just a very simple group of shapes
textures and designs. Also is carved on

536
00:51:00,700 --> 00:51:07,119
the both sides. It seems to have like a
life of its own. Even when you turn it

537

00:51:07,119 --> 00:51:18,789

around. It's really cool. Thank you. I like it very much. Um, you've received a lot of

538

00:51:18,789 --> 00:51:24,530

awards. Ah, which one is the most special to you and...

539

00:51:24,530 --> 00:51:32,780

Oh my. Oh my. They're all really special. I'm so. I'm honored. I feel a little, you know, I'm

540

00:51:32,780 --> 00:51:36,740

grateful that people think what I'm doing special. Most of them are for the

541

00:51:36,740 --> 00:51:40,460

REACH Across Dayton Project which I'm very honored to have been doing for the

542

00:51:40,460 --> 00:51:46,730

past 18 years. Um, I felt, I felt really special that I've been given the

543

00:51:46,730 --> 00:51:52,850

opportunity and the and the and the interest and the wherewithal to bring people

544

00:51:52,850 --> 00:52:01,730

together. And, um, I don't know. They just all really just really wonderful. The NCCJ

545

00:52:01,730 --> 00:52:10,390

award was really special. The Kentucky Colonel Award was really special. Um, I

546

00:52:10,390 --> 00:52:17,570

don't know. I mean I just. I don't. I'm just grateful for all of them. I don't

547

00:52:17,570 --> 00:52:21,980

have one. I mean I just feel a little
flattered and a little uncomfortable. You

548

00:52:21,980 --> 00:52:25,610

know what I mean? I mean I don't do it
for rewards. I don't do what I do for

549

00:52:25,610 --> 00:52:32,570

rewards. It's nice to be honored and it's
nice to be acknowledged. Um, but there's a

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00:52:32,570 --> 00:52:37,310

lot of other people who deserve. It's
just as much acknowledgement as I get or

551

00:52:37,310 --> 00:52:39,320

more and they don't get acknowledged. So
sometimes that bothers me you know. You

552

00:52:41,600 --> 00:52:45,260

know mean? There are more lots of worthy
people out there doing lots of work. The

553

00:52:45,260 --> 00:52:50,950

heroes are basically unsung, and, and so

554

00:52:51,460 --> 00:52:58,100

maybe I can share some of my awards with
them, you know. So um let's put it this

555

00:52:58,100 --> 00:53:05,690

way, which one was one of those awards
that you were not expecting and that you

556

00:53:05,690 --> 00:53:15,170

were completely surprised. The when I
was.... Last time I wasn't expecting. I was

557

00:53:15,170 --> 00:53:21,800
completely surprised. It's like oh my gosh
not another one. Um, um, the first award that

558
00:53:21,800 --> 00:53:30,920
I got was the the Appalachian Award that the Our Common Heritage gave me--the Kentucky

559
00:53:30,920 --> 00:53:37,770
Colonel Award--back oh, back in 1990 four,
three ,or five or something and I was

560
00:53:37,770 --> 00:53:43,710
just totally shocked. I had not a clue
and, and then when I got Innovator of the

561
00:53:43,710 --> 00:53:50,180
Year, I had not a clue I had even been
submitted for that award. And I was just

562
00:53:50,180 --> 00:54:02,490
amazed. Um, um, then I was submitted for
Innovator or no Top Ten Women, and I had

563
00:54:02,490 --> 00:54:07,619
not a clue. I mean, it was like are you
sure and why are you.... Anyway it was very nice

564
00:54:07,619 --> 00:54:22,619
and very special all those awards but..... Um, I feel that as people when we leave this

565
00:54:22,619 --> 00:54:29,700
earth we all want to be remembered as
something, um, or for something special. What,

566
00:54:29,700 --> 00:54:35,250
what do you want to be remembered most
for well. I'd like to leave the world a

567

00:54:35,250 --> 00:54:42,660
better place than where I found it. Um, and
that's really important for me. I love my

568
00:54:42,660 --> 00:54:46,530
art and I want to make art in my
retirement and make a lot of art and I'd

569
00:54:46,530 --> 00:54:50,160
like to be known as an artist but I'd
also like to be known as a peacemaker

570
00:54:50,160 --> 00:54:57,450
and an educator and a person who brought
people together, and um, and who made the

571
00:54:57,450 --> 00:55:01,619
world a better place. I mean that's
really what I would like. Okay this is

572
00:55:01,619 --> 00:55:06,869
another piece by Ms. Little. Well this
represents, this basket represents the earth and I think vessels

573
00:55:06,869 --> 00:55:10,290
and baskets and pots. It's why I'm so
attracted to vessels. But this is

574
00:55:10,290 --> 00:55:16,680
called My Mother's, My Mother's Babies
and in these are soldiers fighting. One, one

575
00:55:16,680 --> 00:55:21,660
war against another war and then these
are, these are the babies of the earth.

576
00:55:21,660 --> 00:55:27,480
And so, so what it really is, is they're
all their mothers' babies. The mothers'

577

00:55:27,480 --> 00:55:31,380

children are in here and these are still
yet the mothers' children. So on the

578

00:55:31,380 --> 00:55:36,000

inside, we try to protect the world and
then we fight. But still yet were the

579

00:55:36,000 --> 00:55:43,140

earth. This is the earth. These are the
Mother Earth's babies. That's so cool. So

580

00:55:43,140 --> 00:55:47,470

that's this piece. I did this piece right after we started

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00:55:47,470 --> 00:55:54,850

the war in Iraq. Was that something that
I really impacted you. Is it the first

582

00:55:54,850 --> 00:56:02,970

war that were talking or the second. You
know, I'd have to see if it's dated. Um, um,

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00:56:02,970 --> 00:56:10,359

I'm not sure. The first war probably. War impacts me a lot because I grew up

584

00:56:10,359 --> 00:56:15,010

during the Vietnam War and lost a lot of
loved ones and friends and my husband's

585

00:56:15,010 --> 00:56:22,150

event on veteran. So, so I just feel like
it so futile and so wasteful. And so no

586

00:56:22,150 --> 00:56:27,730

matter what, it just doesn't accomplish
very much. It doesn't accomplish what

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00:56:27,730 --> 00:56:32,980

maybe mediation or sitting down and talking. Talking can accomplish. Usually it's

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00:56:32,980 --> 00:56:41,470

about power and it's about commodities or resources. And um, and it destroys a lot

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00:56:41,470 --> 00:56:50,080

of people's lives. So that's what caused this piece. This is called Lady Balzac

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00:56:50,080 --> 00:56:56,200

or Homage to Rodan. Um, and it's based after the sculpture of Balzac by Rodan. I

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00:56:56,200 --> 00:57:00,730

felt like there needed to be a female Balzac. They're just a very strong female.

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00:57:00,730 --> 00:57:07,720

It's made out of concrete--cement. And it weighs, it's done over chicken wire. It

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00:57:07,720 --> 00:57:13,930

weighs about 200 pounds, um, and it stands all about five foot tall. But it's a

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00:57:13,930 --> 00:57:19,630

female figure, just a very powerful strong woman. And I think that's what I'm

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00:57:19,630 --> 00:57:26,430

interested in and a lot of my work is that strength not the, not the Hollywood

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00:57:26,430 --> 00:57:32,410

characterization of women, but of real women. And to me she's a real, she has the

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00:57:32,410 --> 00:57:39,160

shape of a real woman. So she's, so it's
Homage to Rodan. Do you, do you feel that

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00:57:39,160 --> 00:57:47,800

you are a strong woman. I feel that I try
to be. Not every day certainly, but, but I

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00:57:47,800 --> 00:57:54,580

I feel like that in our culture we're
told a certain thing about women that's

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00:57:54,580 --> 00:57:58,880

not true. And a lot of women buy into--oh I'm not good enough

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00:57:58,880 --> 00:58:03,259

because I'm not a toothpick blonde. You
know, I don't have the clothes. I don't

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00:58:03,259 --> 00:58:08,119

have the looks and that's not really
what life is about. It's about being who

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00:58:08,119 --> 00:58:12,829

we are as individuals and and knowing
who we are and and celebrating that

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00:58:12,829 --> 00:58:19,430

strength of that beauty. Okay, this was
Balancing Act. This is the story of my

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00:58:19,430 --> 00:58:25,849

life. Life is a balancing act. So here I
am up on stilts and I am walking down

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00:58:25,849 --> 00:58:31,160

the road. One stilt is on one side of the

road. One stilt is on the other side of

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00:58:31,160 --> 00:58:38,680

the road, because I have to stay in
balance. And, and so here I am

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00:58:38,680 --> 00:58:47,319

walking along in life. Trying to balance
it all and to have it all. To do it all.

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00:58:47,319 --> 00:58:54,559

Um and that's actually going to be one
of my last questions is um.... But since we are

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00:58:54,559 --> 00:59:01,549

already talking about balancing, um, how
do you do it all? I mean you're a professor

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00:59:01,549 --> 00:59:08,980

at Sinclair Community College. You are, you are the vice president to um, the um,

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00:59:08,980 --> 00:59:16,039

Fairborn Board of Education. Um, you're an
artist. How do you, how do you find time

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00:59:16,039 --> 00:59:21,380

to do your art? How do you balance it
all. It's difficult. I generally make art

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00:59:21,380 --> 00:59:26,420

in the summers and on breaks. I don't
make a lot of, I don't make art at all in

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00:59:26,420 --> 00:59:30,529

January-February when I'm getting ready
for REACH Across Dayton very much. I have

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00:59:30,529 --> 00:59:34,190

this year because of this commission, but,
but generally I give everything, I give

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00:59:34,190 --> 00:59:40,220

everything to REACH for in
January-February. Um so, so I kind of have

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00:59:40,220 --> 00:59:44,000

these little peg segments and pockets,
you know. The children are raised now.

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00:59:44,000 --> 00:59:48,710

When I was, when I was, when we had our
family they were younger, I didn't, I

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00:59:48,710 --> 00:59:54,259

wasn't on the school board. You know, I
did, I did work at Sinclair you know I was a

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00:59:54,259 --> 01:00:00,500

professor at Sinclair and I did REACH,
but, but I made art less often than I

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01:00:00,500 --> 01:00:05,190

then I am able to do that.
So um, so it's always just this balancing

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01:00:05,190 --> 01:00:08,819

and I can't say that it's always been in
balance because it hasn't. You know

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01:00:08,819 --> 01:00:14,400

sometimes I'll make art and forget it
and not do other things as much. But, but

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01:00:14,400 --> 01:00:18,660

or I'll get, I'll start teaching and I
come home and I'm exhausted because I

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01:00:18,660 --> 01:00:24,240

gave everything to the classroom and I have nothing left. So, so I worked on this

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01:00:24,240 --> 01:00:31,200

balancing thing for years. Right now is a good time. I feel like these are the

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01:00:31,200 --> 01:00:36,660

golden years. Uh you know my husband's retired and he helps me. He's very good

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01:00:36,660 --> 01:00:41,339

craftsman. He also helps with the housework and all of those things. So I'm

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01:00:41,339 --> 01:00:45,809

free to do a lot of community things that I love to do. So it's kind of like we're

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01:00:45,809 --> 01:00:51,359

a team. Um and I'm able to do a whole lot more than I've ever been able to do in

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01:00:51,359 --> 01:00:53,630

my life.