

**NCECA**

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

1966 - 1991

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Harriet E. Brisson

from the Archives of the  
National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts

Scholes Library  
New York State College of Ceramics  
at Alfred University

# MISSION

## National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts

The National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts is an organization whose purpose is to stimulate, promote and improve education in the ceramic arts. NCECA accomplishes this by providing a forum for the exchange of stimulating ideas and vital information about ceramics throughout the creative studies community. NCECA reaches its members and the arts community through an annual conference and general meeting, its publications, its exhibitions, and other educational services. The membership is open to anyone interested in the ceramic arts and includes among others, teachers, students, studio artists, potters, art historians, writers, museum directors and collectors.

NCECA became an independent organization in 1966 after several years of affiliation with the Ceramic Education Council of the American Ceramic Society. The Council is structured to be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the membership and able to address the most current issues of importance in the field.

Revised and approved - 8/20/89

## **CHAIRS AND PRESIDENTS, DESIGN SECTION, CERAMIC EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL, AMERICAN CERAMIC SOCIETY**

### Sites and Dates of Meetings

- 1961 - Ted Randall, Chair of Steering Committee, Design Section, Ceramic Educational Council, American Ceramic Society, Toronto
- 1962 - Ted Randall, Chair of Design Section, New York City
- 1963 - Ted Randall, President, Design Section, Pittsburgh
- 1964 - Lyle Perkins, President, Design Section, Chicago
- 1965 - Karl Martz, President, Design Section, Philadelphia
- 1966 - William Parry, President, Design Section, Washington, DC

## **PRESIDENTS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR THE CERAMIC ARTS**

### Sites and Dates of Annual Conferences

- 1967 - William Parry, Michigan State University, East Lansing
- 1968 - Norman Schulman, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
- 1969 - Robert Turner, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO
- 1970 - James Wozniak, California School of Arts and Crafts, Oakland
- 1971 - Richard Peeler, Royal College of Art, Toronto
- 1972 - Miska Petersham, Arrowmont School of Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN
- 1973 - Don Reitz, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff
- 1974 - Don Reitz, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- 1975 - Don Frith, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA
- 1976 - Don Frith, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge
- 1977 - Warren MacKenzie, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley
- 1978 - Warren MacKenzie, University of Illinois, Champaign
- 1979 - Dick Hay, Pennsylvania State University, with Supermud, University Park
- 1980 - Dick Hay, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- 1981 - William Alexander, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS
- 1982 - Val Cushing, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA
- 1983 - Marge Levy, Georgia State University, Atlanta
- 1984 - Marge Levy, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston University's Program in Artisanry, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston
- 1985 - Lenny Dowhie, Washington University School of Fine Arts, St Louis, MO
- 1986 - Lenny Dowhie, University of Texas and Southwest Craft Center, San Antonio
- 1987 - Jerry Horning, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
- 1988 - Jerry Horning, Oregon Art Institute, Portland
- 1989 - Mary Jane Edwards, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO
- 1990 - Mary Jane Edwards, Arts and Education Community in Ohio and Kentucky, Cincinnati
- 1991 - Jay Lacouture, Arizona State University, Tempe

# NCECA - THE FIRST 25 YEARS: 1966-1991

## INTRODUCTION

Although the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts is celebrating its twenty-fifth Anniversary this year, it was conceived more than 30 years ago. In 1959, according to Melvin Bernstein in *Art and Design at Alfred*, "the relationship between the ceramic engineers and the American Ceramic Society (ACS) had thrived; between the Ceramic Art Department and the ACS it had become desiccated. The troubling questions in teaching ceramic art were routinely answered by invoking the team or happy family metaphor. The Ceramic Educational Council (CEC), a 'class' in the administrative ACS structure, was aware of the growing strain of alienation."

At the 1959 annual meeting of the American Ceramic Society, Ted Randall was invited to present a paper on "The Council and Ceramic Art Education." In it he reported on the results of a 1958 Alfred University survey on ceramic art education. It showed 227 colleges offering ceramic courses: 60 had ceramic art departments of which 34 had graduate programs in ceramic art. He specifically asked his audience for their advice about art and design education in practice at that time in college art programs. After his presentation, the ACS Council felt they should attempt to find ways by which to answer the needs of ceramic art education and suggested that a separate Educational Council be organized for the design people.

A questionnaire was sent out from Alfred University in March 1960 asking ceramic art educators if they were interested in forming a national organization that would address their specific needs. There were 150 positive responses. As a result, the Council invited interested educators to come to their next meeting and parallel, but separate, meetings were arranged for the engineering and the art educators. Ted Randall organized and chaired this meeting in Toronto on April 22, 1961. Twenty-two ceramic art educators from 17 colleges attended, at the invitation of the CEC, to explore possible ways to support the teaching of ceramic art and design on the college level. William Parry moved "to form a separate organization within the framework of the present Council to be known as the "Design Section" of the Ceramic Educational Council of the American Ceramic Society". This passed and was sent to the Council.

When the group met again as guests of the Council, in New York City, April 1962, their number had grown to 38 teachers from 30 colleges. The motion "that all present guests of the Ceramic Educational Council take out full membership in the American Ceramic Society" was given unanimous approval.

## THE FORMATIVE YEARS

On November 30, 1962, the Board of Trustees of the ACS approved the following: "It is recommended that the art group be permitted to organize as the Design Section of the Ceramic Educational Council. They shall be permitted to elect their own officers and conduct their own affairs and programs in conformance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Society. It is further recommended that this section be established on a trial basis for six years (as of 1960). The growth and activities of this section should be examined during this time and then suitable action taken by the Board to continue or discontinue this organization or to replace it with a suitable one." (Quote from the 1963 Program for the Design Section Meeting, April 27-28)

This meeting, held in Pittsburgh, was attended by 42 ceramic art educators. The following slate of officers was elected: Ted Randall, President; Lyle Perkins, President-Elect; Irwin Whitaker, Vice-President; Donald Frith, Secretary-Treasurer. Standing committees were formed; the Rules Committee was asked to begin drawing up Rules and By-Laws; \$83. was collected for a publications "kitty". The first "Potlatch" was held as a result of the note at the end of the agenda for this meeting: "Remember every self-respecting potter attending this meeting thereby contracts to bring one small pot (his own work) for exchange with some other luckier potter". In addition, available exhibitions were listed at the Pittsburgh Museum, the Arts and Crafts Center, University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Tech.

Growth continued with 66 paid members, representing 37 colleges attending the meeting in Chicago, April 17, 1964. Lyle Perkins became the second president of the Design Section. The following were elected to chair the Standing Committees established at the 1963 meeting: Curriculum, Ben Steinsor; Exhibitions, Jack Cannon; Liaison, Pete Slusarski; Membership, Norm Schulman; Placement, Henry Lin; Program, William Parry; Publications, Ted Randall; Rules, James Wozniak; Technical, Val Cushing. Two-day meetings were established, with the outgoing president presiding the first day; incoming president presiding on the second. Slide talks were given on subjects ranging from new kiln designs to tamped-earth houses; the second "Potlatch" was held.

At this meeting the following Statement of Involvement, Purpose, and Function was incorporated into the minutes as a record of the thinking up to this time and to give direction to future growth:

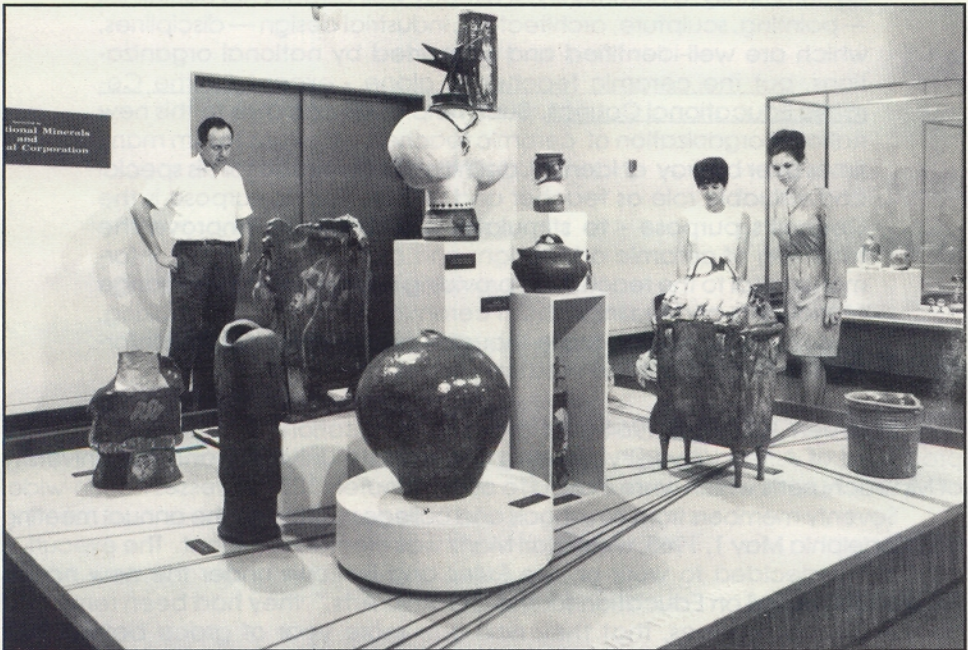
"Ceramics is a comparative newcomer to the creative studies community, a community of already well-established disciplines — painting, sculpture, architecture, industrial design — disciplines, which are well-identified and supported by national organizations, but the ceramic teacher is alone - except for the Ceramic Educational Council. Such help as he can give to this new national organization of ceramic teachers will return to him many times over by way of identity, definition and support for his special and valuable role as teacher and potter. For his purpose is the Council's purpose - to stimulate, promote, and improve the teaching of ceramic art, design, and craft, by gathering information vital to the teacher, by providing a forum for the exchange of thoughts and feelings about ceramics teaching and making, and by disseminating these thoughts and feelings and this information throughout the creative studies community."

Between 1960 and 1964 over a dozen publications and newsletters were produced at Alfred University, Bowling Green State University and the University of Massachusetts which were mailed to approximately 325 addresses nation-wide.

Seventy members from 46 schools and colleges attended the annual meeting in Philadelphia May 1, 1965, when Karl Martz was elected President. The executive committee decided to work on the Rules and By-Laws under the new name, "National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts," they had been reminded by the Council Trustees, that they had one more year of grace before their evaluation and that they had the option of forming a separate "class," an administrative category within the ACS structure. The Program consisted of slide lectures ranging from presentations on Spanish potters to wood-burning kilns.

Work on the organization of a ceramics exhibition, originally discussed with the Academie Internationale de la Ceramique (organization of UNESCO) in 1964, was continued with support from International Minerals and Chemical Corporation, Skokie, Illinois. The Executive Committee of the Design Section met in Columbus, Ohio, June 10, 1965 to plan the national exhibition, "CERAMIC ARTS - U.S.A. - 1966". It was scheduled to open at the IMC and then travel to the Smithsonian Institution to coincide with the annual meeting of the American Ceramic Society there in May 1966. On June 11, 1965, the General Secretary of the ACS told the Design Section that they could not proceed with their plans for the exhibition without the approval of the Board of Trustees. In spite of this, Karl Martz sent the executive committee's exhibition proposal to the IMC on June 15. The Board of Trustees wrote Martz on September 1, 1965 that they had decided the Design Section could not be permitted to participate in this exhibition. The Board also rejected the proposed budget for publishing their Newsletter. These two actions coming as they did just before the Design Section's status within the ACS was to be evaluated and the way in which the decision was handed down, could only increase the sense of alienation felt previously by the ceramic art educators. Certainly, it played a major role in the decision regarding continued affiliation with the ACS that was to be so hotly debated at the May 1966 meeting.

The International Minerals and Chemical Corporation assumed the sole sponsorship of the "CERAMIC ARTS - U.S.A. - 1966" which was open to the public from February 7-20 at the IMC Gallery in Skokie, Illinois. It included the work of 120 invited potters. The members of the Jury for Selection and Awards were Karl



*CERAMIC ARTS - USA - 1966, Smithsonian Institution , Washington, DC  
Rudy Autio, Louis Mendez, Win Ng, James and Nan McKinnell, Norman Schulman,  
Otto and Vivika Heino, Bill Farrell, Karen Karnes, Val Cushing, Fred Bauer, Ken Ferguson.*

Martz, Ted Randall and Paul Soldner, who worked with Paul V. Gardner, Consultant to the Jury for the Smithsonian to select the 32 pieces from this show for exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution during the May meeting of the ACS in Washington, DC. The exhibition, with its catalogue of photographs of every piece in the show, was an extremely successful event and set the stage for future national exhibitions.

#### National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts Established

One hundred-forty members attended the annual meeting in Washington, DC, May 7 and 8, 1966. After hearing the committee reports, President Martz opened discussion on continued affiliation with, or separation from the ACS. The April 1966 Newsletter contained a statement about the "Coming Vote on Official Affiliation with ACS". It stated that the six-year organizational period under the wing of the engineering Ceramic Educational Council was over; thus, a vote had to be taken to affiliate or not to affiliate at the 1966 annual meeting in Washington, DC. Although affiliation had appeared to be the best "home" for the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, some doubt had arisen. Twice the ACS had shown their total lack of understanding of the needs and interests of the ceramic art educators. The debate went on all day and into the next. Incoming President Parry presided over the second day of discussion. He moved that "Whatever the vote may be, this group should stay intact"; this was given unanimous approval.

The members voted 79 to 56 for separation. It was agreed that "all committees remain in place for the next three years and future meetings be held on college campuses, art institutes, or craft centers in the spring". The executive committee was urged to meet prior to the following spring, charged to produce an organizational plan and program including new Rules and By-Laws and to keep the membership informed by the Newsletter. The Treasurer was empowered to collect dues and donations.

May 9, 1966, President Parry wrote to Willis Moody, Trustee of the Ceramic Educational Council, formally withdrawing the Design Section from the American Ceramic Society. He also wrote a statement on September 14, 1966 to clarify and substantiate the action taken at the May meeting in Washington, DC. This was included in the October 1966 Newsletter, Issue I, sent to 400 people on their mailing list. The following is quoted from this statement:

"The NCECA was formed May 8, 1966, out of the Design Section of the Ceramic Educational Council of the American Ceramic Society at its annual meeting in Washington, D.C. It is the most recent development in a series of moves that have brought together potters who are teaching ceramics...From the beginning, its structure has been identical with its membership. Those interested in technical information, curricula, program, etc., found others with whom their interests connected. There is healthy novelty for most of us in a committee structure which can adhere so closely to the interests of its individuals.

"Early in its formation Ted Randall described our involvement in the following way: 'To set up a forum for immediate, face to face, exchange of thoughts and feelings about ceramics - teaching and making.' In reviewing the records of these past six years, the repetition given this phrase indicates its basic currency...

"A valuable outgrowth of these meetings can be formalized in publications, exhibitions, accreditation studies developing out of the following operating committees: Curricula, Bill Alexander; Exhibitions, Charles Fager; Liaison, Joel Myers; Membership, Don Reitz; Placement, Henry Lin; Program, Louis Mendez;



Publications, Charles Lakofsky; Rules, James Wozniak; and Technical, Mark Hansen. As its governing body, the Executive Council is made up of former presidents and the incumbent officers elected at the annual meetings...

"I feel it is necessary to be candid about the fact that the vote to establish a separate organization was a close one. There are realistic questions about our individual willingness to assume the burden of details involved. There is no question, however, about our opportunity to amplify the effect of what we do separately, by the association which this organization represents. But however we might spell out our objectives and possible activities, they are but extensions of our most basic gratification in getting together to swap pots and ideas, to show slides, to look and listen to others with similar interests, — away from and out of the context of our individual situations. NCECA is therefore primarily an agency using the resources in time and money surrendered by its membership to guarantee this annual event and the communications and preparations incidental to it. Few of us can anticipate being free to attend each annual meeting and for many the distance will often be too great. In order to hold such memberships the Newsletter must become a meaningful and eagerly look-for communication. We have had in the past formative years excellent survey studies in curricula, staffing, fellowships and grants, raw materials supply, among other subjects; and visual presentations on kiln design and studio equipment. The increased importance of the Newsletter will in short time lead to a deeper examination of the data such as these, and a much enhanced appreciation of its projection and meaning."

The Preamble to the Constitution and By-Laws clearly states the objectives of the organization:

"The structure and function of this organization of artists and teachers of ceramics is defined by the Constitution and By-Laws. The articles of the Constitution describe structure. The parallel articles of the By-Laws define the functions of this structure. The one building stability, sustaining the organization; the other providing an immediate and sensitive response to the needs of each member — insuring that the energy each member gives to the organization shall return to him many times over by way of identity, definition, and support for his special and valuable role of teacher and potter. For each member's purpose is the council's purpose — to stimulate, promote and improve ceramic art, design and craft by: providing a forum for the exchange of thoughts and feelings about ceramics, gathering information vital to the artist and teacher, and by spreading this thought, feeling, and information throughout the creative studies community."

The ground work was laid for the Constitution at the membership meeting in 1963 after the Board of Trustees of the ACS had approved the Design Section. The Rules Committee began its work on the Rules and By-Laws which developed into the NCECA Constitution and By-Laws, completed by Ted Randall. Since its approval in 1967, the Preamble has remained essentially unchanged. The Constitution and By-Laws have been modified over the last twenty-five years in order to answer the changing needs of the membership and the organization. Of the ten original Standing Committees formed at that time, only the Publications and Exhibitions Committees still exist in this form today. The \$83 "kitty" from members' donations in 1963 marked the beginning of Publications. The first Potlatch was also held that year. The NCECA Members' Exhibitions have grown out of this, as well as the extensive museum and gallery showings scheduled at present day conferences. "CERAMIC ARTS - U.S.A. - 1966" was a truly major achievement.

beginning at the IMC in Skokie, IL and continuing as an extremely successful exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution. The Board and the members, through their commitment during the early years, laid a solid foundation upon which the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts has been able to continue to prosper and grow.

## THE EARLY YEARS: 1967-1971

The newly formed and independent National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts held its first meeting April 14-16, 1967, at Michigan State University, East Lansing. William Parry was president.

On Friday afternoon arriving members were welcomed at an Open House, followed by dinner and an informal discussion of slides of members' work and travel. Saturday morning began with a membership meeting to hear reports from the President and Committees. Dorothy and Lyle Perkins had prepared a chart showing the organizational structure of NCECA. The Constitution and By-Laws were presented and approved. This was the first action taken to define the type of organization understood to be the most suitable for the assembled group. A Keynote Address by Fred Schwartz, Art Department, Michigan State University, opened the program. Dan Rhodes talked about "Sculpture Techniques and Observations", followed by a lecture on "Salt Glaze" by Marc Hansen.

In the evening, the annual Potlatch was held in the Gallery of the Art Building. The March 1967 Newsletter had asked members to do the following: "In order for...these pots to be useful to the people at Michigan State University as exhibit material, your work should be sent to arrive no later than April 7. However, additional pieces can be included in the Potlatch at the time of the exchange, if you cannot manage the deadline. Send something you are proud of and pack it carefully. It is expected that we will each carry our exchange pot back home." After the Potlatch, everyone was invited to Louis Raynor's home for a "Bring your own Bottle" Bust.

During the year, the Publications Committee had produced four Newsletters and the first part of "Clay Body Preparation" by Val Cushing. President Parry said in his Annual Report, "While the Newsletter's basic use is reporting, it can serve a wider role ...for those of us who cannot attend meetings with regularity, it must become an effective substitute for them." He recommended that all NCECA papers be published under the Newsletter logo and copyrighted to reflect the importance of NCECA membership.

For 1967 the regular Membership fee was \$25; student membership was \$5 and did not carry voting privileges. Conference registration was \$10. In July 1967, there were 127 paid members. The financial statement showed a balance of \$2682 after all expenses had been paid. Deposits had come entirely from dues and registration fees.

Norm Schulman was president when the second Annual Conference was held in April 1968 at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence. The membership had increased to 172. Gyory Kepes gave the Keynote Address. In the evening, everyone boarded buses to go to the Francis Farm in Rehoboth, Massachusetts for an old fashioned New England Clam Bake with "all the beer you can drink, clam chowder, clamcakes, lobster, steamed clams — The Works." Unfortunately, the lobsters were gone before everyone had been served. But there was

plenty to eat as Clam Bakes are notorious for their over-abundance of food.

On Saturday, Paul Donhauser gave a slide lecture, and the traditional Potlatch was held. During the meetings, the possibility of organizing and funding a national student show was discussed. Members felt that there should be something tangible to take home in the form of a written report from the Technical Committee. The Business Meeting minutes of April 27, 1968, record that Robert Turner relayed a conversation with Lois Moran of the American Crafts Council in which "she stressed that our organization should concentrate on the one area in which we are unique — ceramic technical matters — and not fall into a pattern which duplicates the efforts of other organizations."

NCECA held its 1969 Annual Conference at the Kansas City Art Institute in Kansas City, Missouri. President Robert Turner reported on the progress of NCECA over its eight years of growth from when it was founded as a body of "potter-teachers". He said in part, "I would emphasize two points necessary to our vitality as a body: first, the interest-oriented committees which members use to create technics panels, exchange curricula information, hear new ideas from other sources in a way we could not do as individuals. Secondly, it is equally crucial to our vitality as a body to keep a one-to-one relationship between us as individuals — by an annual meeting that is not over-structured." Don Frith reported that NCECA had obtained a Certificate of Incorporation on April 18, 1969 from the State of Illinois, giving the organization the advantage of not having to collect or pay taxes.

James Melchert of the University of California, Berkeley and a prime force in the FUNK Movement, gave the Keynote Address on "Non-Pottery". At the Nelson Gallery, Dan Rhodes spoke on "Contemporary Trends", followed by gallery tours and lectures by the Directors and Staff. Other program highlights were the experimental films and panel discussions, including one that focused on the Melchert's Keynote topic and another on "Fuels" by the Technical Committee. The Annual Potlatch was held.

The first Honorary Membership was awarded posthumously to Dr. Paul E. Cox, who had passed away earlier in the year. The 1967 NCECA Constitution provided for Honorary Memberships to be awarded to "Persons who have made an outstanding contribution to the professional development of the ceramic arts".

The First National Student Show with a catalogue was assembled by NCECA and exhibited at the 1969 Conference. Unfortunately, it did not live up to expectations and the touring portion was cancelled. The judges, James Melchert and Daniel Rhodes, stated that "After careful study of the entries in the student show, we recommend that no traveling show be mounted this year. The uneven quality of the work submitted, and the lack of a sufficient number of pieces having authority and originality could only result in a show which would not fairly represent the existing range and excellence of student effort in the member institutions". Other shows were scheduled, including the "National Ceramic Arts Invitational of Twenty Potters" at the Kansas City Art Institutes.

The Curriculum Committee, chaired by Minnie Negoro, had conducted a survey to establish minimum requirements for BFA and BA degrees. A file on Graduate Theses written between 1936 and 1968 had been compiled and filed under classifications of clay, glaze, history, philosophy, etc. The Publications Committee had produced three Newsletters and three papers that eventually were included in the "Permanent Publication."



*Board Meeting, November 1970*

*Dan Reitz, James Wozniak, Don Frith, Dr. Arthur Friedberg and Richard Peeler.*

The 1970 Annual Conference was held at the California College of Art and Crafts in Oakland with James Wozniak serving as President. Approximately 135 people registered for the event. The Keynote Address was by John Coplans, Editor of Art Forum and an authority on abstract expressionist pottery. During the Members Meeting, Richard Peeler presented Ted Randall with the first Fellow of the Council Award. As provided in the 1967 NCECA Constitution, "Fellows shall be persons who have made an outstanding contribution to education for the ceramic arts."

Technical Panels were held on "Glass Blowing" and "Clay Decoration"; a lecture was given by Clarence Shangraw, Curator of Ceramics in the Bundage Collection, De Young Museum, and a Glass Exhibition was held at the California College of Arts and Crafts. Membership had reached 217.

At the NCECA Board of Directors meeting on November 7, 1970, Dr. Arthur Friedberg of the American Ceramic Society discussed ways in which NCECA and ACS might benefit from closer association. Questions of affiliation once again were addressed as well as the possibility of the ACS underwriting awards, meetings, and publications. The Board discussed the pros and cons of the proposal and decided to continue investigating the potential advantages. As a result of expenses incurred at that year's Oakland Conference, NCECA was having financial problems and thought that they might have to dip into their "\$500 sinking fund" to support the upcoming meeting in Toronto. Such an offer from the ACS could have been viewed as most welcome assistance at that time.

Fortunately, NCECA had its largest attendance to date at the 1971 Conference in Toronto, Canada at which 500 people registered. The number would have been greater had the Canadian Border Guards been more cooperative in allowing long haired potters to cross the border without asking some of them to post a \$100 security bond.

The conference was held at the Royal College of Art and was presided over by President Richard Peeler. Because of the "sad state" of their finances, there was no poster; just a single sheet for registration was sent out. To welcome the conferees on their first evening in the city, all were invited to the Opening

Reception of the "Canadian Ceramics '71" at the Royal Ontario Museum.

For the first time, several "rap" sessions were scheduled simultaneously under the direction of well known craftsmen. They were informal and spontaneous sessions intended to develop entirely out of group participation. Topics included "Salt Glaze" with Don Reitz; "Teaching" led by George Kokis; "Kiln Construction" by Dick Hay; "Glass" by Fritz Dreisbach; and "Mixed/Multi-Media" with James Wozniak. Two panels were scheduled — "The Professional Ceramist" and "Ceramics and Education in Over-Developed Countries".

The number of new members increased by 205 to a total of 409. The reason given in the minutes was that for its first three years, NCECA had been composed primarily of teachers. In 1970 student membership was encouraged. Of the 205 new members in 1971, half were students.

The Toronto Conference, with its large attendance, helped NCECA to survive financially and made it possible for the organization to move on to bigger and better conferences and activities in the seventies. The program format of having many presentations scheduled concurrently was established there.

The growth of the organization was seen in the compilation of the first "Permanent Publication" produced by Charles Lakofsky. It contained the papers presented at earlier Conferences.

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: 1972-1980

The decade between 1972 and 1981 was a time of growth and building forward momentum. In 1972, the membership stood at 590; ten years later it had nearly doubled to 1100. It was also a period of experimentation, bringing with it unexpected swings between successes and disappointments. Conferences varied in content from year to year and from site to site, and in timing from late winter to early summer. The personality of the Board and reactions of the members to previous Conferences undoubtedly shaped the content and quality of the programs. A good sense of humor seemed to have prevailed, helping the organization take obstacles in stride and move forward. The interest and dedication of Board members was a constant in insuring NCECA's continued growth in all areas.

Arrowmont School of Crafts, Gatlinburg, Tennessee was the site of the 1972 Conference. Since it was held at the end of March, it was supposed to be warm and sunny, but instead, a cold wet snow fell on everyone and was particularly uncomfortable for those who had chosen to camp. A total of 796 people registered; 618 of these were students.

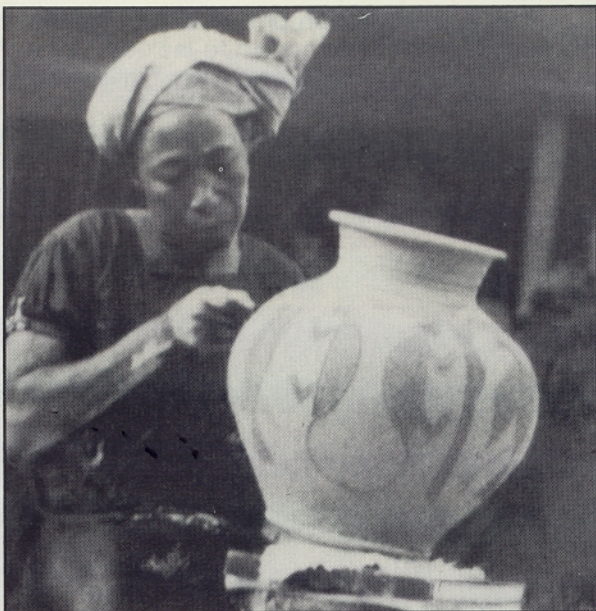
Miska Petersham was president; FOLK CRAFT was the theme of the conference, for the location gave the planners an opportunity to use the natural setting of the area, with its strong regional and traditional potteries as a thematic springboard. A. D. Alpine, Inc. hosted its first cocktail party, which was to become a tradition for many years. The Southern Highland Entertainers provided the music for the "foot stompin' dance" that will long be remembered by those who took part.

At the Business Meeting the By-Laws were changed: "All officers shall serve for three years, with the exception of the President and Vice-President who shall serve for two years. They shall take office at the beginning of the last business session of the annual meeting and serve until succeeded." Henry Gernhardt from the Everson Museum, discussed reviving the Syracuse National Exhibition.

The Placement Committee provided a place to post jobs and conduct interviews "because this is an important function of NCECA", according to the meeting minutes.

The seminars covered a variety of topics: Raku, Glass, Salt Glazing, Kilns, Production Pottery and even Pollution. There was a panel discussion on "Folk Potters of the Appalachians", which augmented the exhibition on "Pre-industrial and Family Potters of the East Coast and the Appalachian Areas". Participants brought examples of their work to this conference, which they put out on tables in order to provide a sort of Members Show. This was not a Potlatch, but certainly it was an outgrowth of that activity and would eventually lead to regular Members Exhibitions.

A high point of the Conference was the demonstration by Ladi Kwali, the Nigerian potter, whom Michael Cardew had brought to this country for a series of workshops. He gave an informal talk and slide presentation explaining her forming and decorating techniques. That year NCECA reprinted Cardew's "Potters and Amateur Potters" in which he said, "Amateur just means you love it; professional merely means you are good enough at it to earn your living that way. But a good professional, if he stays alive will never lose the spark and the freshness, even some of the clumsiness, coming from his probably amateur beginnings. And the amateur is always being drawn irresistibly by glimpses of things that at the beginning he never thought would be within his range."



*Ladi Kwali demonstrating at 1972 Conference in Gatlinburg, TN.*

Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, was the site of the next Conference in 1973. Don Reitz was President. There were 372 registrants, a significant drop from the previous meeting. Low attendance at meetings held in the West was attributed to the geographical distribution of the membership; at that time, 75% of the members were concentrated in states east of the Mississippi. The Technical Committee had an active year planning panels on Plaster, Clays and Materials, White Wares, Raku Kilns, Low Fire, and Glass. The major exhibition held in Flagstaff was "1973 FUNK - Ceramics and Glass".

Attendance rebounded at the 1974 Conference held at the University of Wisconsin in Madison; 861 registered out of which 566 became paid members. It was the beginning of a trend toward large registrations held in the Mid-West. Paul Soldner and a beautiful young woman "streaked" across the stage in the

middle of the Opening Session, breaking the solemnity of that event. Clayton Bailey contributed to the spirit of things with the first public demonstration of his experimental technique on "Internal Combustion Ceramics" made of 50% horse manure and 50% clay. "Shape it and just light it with a match" were the only instructions.

Stephen Zawojski, Chair of the Technical Committee, addressed the need for more kiln and burner information in response to the energy crisis. He requested a systematic means for documenting information presented at panels, demonstrations and discussions. He suggested making tape recordings, video tapes and publishing the papers presented at the annual conferences. During the early seventies, documentation of NCECA activities had been a problem. Improvements in Publications were to come slowly. By the mid 1970s Newsletters were produced on a more regular basis and gave better coverage of conference events.

The slide collection of members work that had been initiated by Richard Peeler in 1968 and expanded to include slides of exhibitions in 1969, was available for purchase. This function was taken over by the Publications Committee in 1971. Members' slides were phased out and replaced with slide kits of the main exhibitions at annual Conferences. One of the first slide sets available was the "1974 Salt and Raku" Invitational Exhibition of work from potters in the U.S. and Canada. It had originated at the conference in Madison. Five of the Panels at the 1975 Conference were documented on cassette tapes and listed for sale in the Newsletters, along with the slide kits and publications.



*Board Meeting, November 1975 - Left to right, front and backs of head; Jack Troy, Don Frith, Nancy Hay, Dick Hay; Facing - left to right, Don Reitz, Warren MacKenzie, Roger Corsaw, Joe Bova, Susan Parks, Marge Levy, Pete Dahoda and Jane Ford.*

The Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia hosted the 1975 Conference. It had as its theme TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF CERAMIC ART. Don Frith began his two year term as President. The Program was the most ambitious one to date. It began with a Keynote "Conversation" between Peter Voulkos and Ken Ferguson.

Many in the audience expected the two famous potters to tell them how to "make it" in the art world. The speakers did not provide the secret formula, but rather obliquely and honestly, said they did not have the answer. It was an objective lesson, particularly for students, who so often seek a clear-cut formula for success.

In keeping with the theme of the Conference, there were nine panels dealing with ceramics of the past, ranging from "American Ceramic Art 1730-1930" to "The Life and Work of Henry Mercer". Eleven Panels on technical subjects covered topics from "Sensing Reduction in the Kiln" to "Plaster As Used by the Potter." The NCECA sponsored Exhibitions were "Approaches, Contemporary Ceramic Education", an invitational faculty and student show from East Coast Schools and the "Container Show '75." Nine other shows, related to the NCECA Conference, were shown by Philadelphia galleries.



*Pre-Conference Kiln Workshop at 1976 Conference in Baton Rouge.*

The 1976 Conference was held at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, with an even bigger and more ambitious program than the previous year. There were extensive Pre-Conference events covering every conceivable aspect of ceramics from "Non-Production Use of the Wheel", "Conceptual Use of Clay," "Production Pottery and Making It" to firing kilns with oil, gas and wood.

The theme of the Conference was SPIRIT and was carried effectively throughout the entire program. The Keynote Address was given by Al Chung-Liang Huang and included "T'ai Chi: The Watercourse Way" and "T'ai Chi-Kung Fu", a Theater Dance Presentation. There were numerous slide lectures and panels—six on history and aesthetics, six technical programs, three on curriculum and two dealing with employment. "Fun and Games in the Ceramic Circus" included a performance by an eccentric mime/professional juggler, the flying of



an Atmospheric Sky Sculpture and George Kokis leading a "concerto grosso" for throwers, slabbers, and pinchers.

Clayton Bailey and Victor Spinski presented their "History of Pornography in Ceramics." The major exhibitions were "50 American Ceramic Artists", juried by Pete Dahoda, Marge Levy and Dick Hay and "Approaches II: Faculty and Students" from 28 schools.

June 12-15, 1977, was the latest time in the year that an NCECA Conference was ever scheduled. It was held at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, during Warren MacKenzie's first term as President. The theme was DOING MORE WITH LESS; 450 registered for the event. Camping facilities were available so costs could be kept as low as possible to encourage a greater number of students to participate. The President and conference planners felt that this was an extremely important part of their education as potters.

The Keynote Address "The Challenge to Change: Environmental Friendly Energy Sources" was given by Peter North, Professor of Architectural Design, University of Vera Cruz, Mexico and advisor for environmental design to the Governor of Vera Cruz. There were technical presentations on porcelain, earthenware, the Bendel Burner, ceramic fiber insulation, and rammed earth construction for building. The workshop by Lowell Baker on "The Sawdust Injection Burner System" was definitely doing more with less. Five lectures were on history and aesthetics. Practical issues were addressed in "Legal and Business Considerations for the Artist" and "Bookkeeping and Taxes for the Craftsman." A panel discussion on "Teaching Ceramics in the High School Art Program" augmented an exhibition of student work from the outstanding ceramic programs in Colorado high schools. On the lighter side, "Ceramic Art and Archaeology of Ancient and Modern



*Dr. Gladstone shows proof of Bigfoot Penil Bone in "Kaolithic Wonders" at 1977 Confence in Greeley, CO.*

Mythical Cultures" was presented by Clayton Bailey ("Dr. Gladstone"), Art Morrison, and Jere Lykins. They described "Kaolithic Wonders of the World made from Thermally Metamorphosed Mud".

The 1978 NCECA Conference held at the University of Illinois, Champaign, had the highest registration thus far — 960. The Keynote Address was given by James Melchert, who was now Director of the Visual Arts Section, National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, DC. (He had given the Keynote Address at the 1969 Conference while he was at the University of California, Berkeley.) Part of his message was, "I want to say something about creative imagination. I regard it as a power-source that helps you transcend the limitations of where you think you are. After all if you're stuck, it's because you think you're stuck. Imagination is what converts problems into opportunities and dead ends into new beginnings...it is having confidence in the creative imagination and respect for what it produces. It's one source of energy that we can't deplete. It seems that the more we use it the more there is of it to use."

The "Works in the World" invitational exhibition was a major show of outdoor works. Sixteen sculptors participated in transforming Hessel Park with their on-site work. The precedent for environmental works existed in contemporary art; however, this was the first attempt in this direction at an NCECA Conference.

It originated partly because of limited gallery space in Champaign. "Place Settings", a show of traditional and non-traditional tableware, was also an invitational, as was "NCECA Drawing 1978", works on paper by artists and craftsmen who usually work in clay or glass. "NCECA Schools" included student work from fifteen schools in the Mid-West that had been invited to participate.

The Curriculum Committee was active with five presentations, including "Working Outside the Studio" and "Sources of Creative Energies". "Aesthetics As A Force in Creativity" and "Recycling" were among the many other presentations. Technical panels covered information on OSHA and toxic materials, blanket insulation, architectural ceramics, and plaster by a professional mold maker. On the lighter side, "Compression Tests Shatter Esthetic Beliefs" was presented by Clayton Bailey.

NCECA held a joint conference with Supermud \* in 1979 at Penn State University in late winter. Dick Hay, who was then President, reported that more than "2400 people attended...making it perhaps the largest meeting of ceramic artists in this country's history." Singer and songwriter John Hartford gave the Opening Keynote by entertaining the audience with two hours of his music. It was a phenomenal performance enjoyed by everyone attending.

The program was full to overflowing. There were three or four events running concurrently — lectures, slide presentations, panels, demonstrations and exhibitions. The panels included "Non-Degree Schools", "Contemporary Glass - Four Directions" and "The Job Market." History and Aesthetics presentations included "The Last 100 Years of American Ceramics", "Aesthetics" and "Architectural Ceramics." Technical panels offered "Safety and Hazardous Materials", "Once Firing" and "Kiln Repair and Maintenance".

The panel on "Women in Clay" grew out of a women's meeting at the previous year's conference. Participants recommended that there be a panel at the 1979 Conference on professional women potters and teachers to serve as

\* Annual ceramic conference held only at Penn State University. No longer active.

role models for students. It opened with a statement by Paula Winokur saying, "that her concern was not to create a sense of separation or sexism, but to point out the strengths of the many women who work in clay and the tremendous contributions they have made to the field as teachers and artists."

The planners, anticipating that there would be large audiences for the demonstrations, scheduled them in an auditorium with closed circuit television projection capabilities, making it possible to see all aspects of the intricate work in progress. The exhibitions, organized by NCECA and Supermud, were exciting and included a show of student work, an "NCECA Invitational Exhibition" of nine mid-career artists, the "Finger Hall of Fame", and the "Studio Photo Show".

From March 5-9, 1980, NCECA held its Annual Conference at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor with approximately 1200 in attendance. The program reflected the on-going discussion of the membership and the Board regarding the need to place greater emphasis on aesthetics and critical thinking as topics of presentations at conferences. "Aesthetics: Criticism and the Ceramic Arts" was a very timely panel and was enthusiastically received by the conferees. Other panels focused on "Career Alternatives for Artists", which was expanded by the group that discussed the "Kohler Arts/Industry Program". "Ceramics, Great Potential for Mischief" brought humor to the program when the raku kiln "exploded" on stage; later the two people who had been in charge of the firing came to the evening's social event in wheel chairs and wrapped in bandages.

Exhibitions included "Pieces of Eight", "A Potters Dozen", "Glass", and "Kohler Artists in Industry" at the University of Michigan. There was a Student Show representing six schools in the region, and eighteen Conference related exhibitions in Ann Arbor, Detroit and Bloomfield Hills.

A major accomplishment in 1980 was the production of the first edition of the NCECA Journal, marking the beginning of a new era of professionalism as well as the potential for complete coverage of NCECA activities and conferences.

#### Re-evaluation:

The goals of the organization were being increasingly questioned. George Kokis, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, wrote an article in the February 1978 Newsletter in which he observed a gradual shift in emphasis from a predominantly technically oriented organization to one placing greater emphasis on aesthetic considerations: "It's a little difficult to tell if this trend is a reflection of the values of those planning the meetings", he said "or if it derives from a much broader source — the general membership itself...I like the trend I think I am seeing and I like to think it is happening because NCECA is responsive to its grass roots needs...I like to think of NCECA endowed with exceptional resources, diverse, energetic, a constantly reshapable instrument in the hands of its designers, like a lump of clay. What a history...and what a future!"

At the April 8, 1978, Board Meeting, three members requested that the next Conference deal with aesthetic considerations and art criticism. The Program Chair was directed to schedule such topics. Tony Hepburn agreed to head an ad hoc committee to work on this.

In November 1978, Hepburn wrote a short article for a Newsletter Supplement on "The Clay Club and Other Related Thoughts", in which he pointed out that "The clay explosion has produced thousands of potters with the technique to produce pots, but with little background for the critically analytical thinking that develops the understanding of what is in fact a good pot...To start with a

material and not have a problem to solve or moreover to be tied to a particular material regardless of the problems, I suggest is undesirable." He invited responses to be directed to him for a report.

The minutes of the October, 1979 Board Meeting in Chicago mention some of the questions asked: "What is the basic purpose and philosophy of NCECA? Who are its members and who is the organization serving or not serving? Should we be concerned only with "college art"? Why is it that potters do not seem to be interested in NCECA?" In the discussion, it was suggested that NCECA have two or three parallel goals and try to serve the needs of students, teachers and also professional potters and ceramic artists.

The Executive Board met in New York City in May of 1980 and continued their discussion of NCECA's goals. "We can expand the participation possibilities of members by structuring events like group discussions at conferences ... The people we are serving are mostly the academic community...We should expand more to be sure to respond to the needs of studio potters, ceramic artists and part-time studio people ... We should try to reach high school art teachers to improve the ceramics education at that level and make the teachers aware of opportunities for college education in ceramics for their students ... We must continue to have thought-provoking shows and be sure that the student shows are representative and equitably selected ... We must see to it that the quality and reliability of the Newsletter and Journal improve in order to fulfill the function of communication and contact."

There was general agreement that the Journal and the Newsletter were key to projecting a forward-looking image to the public and a primary reason that people will join and stay members.

## COMING OF AGE: 1981-1991

Big changes were taking place in response to the questions that had been asked in the late seventies regarding the goals and nature of NCECA. By 1981, NCECA was moving toward providing a broader range of activities for its members and for the field of ceramics in general. Regina Brown was hired as Executive Secretary in March 1981. This gave the organization an identifiable person to contact with a permanent address. She is now permanently located in Bandon, Oregon, where she can be contacted when needed to answer a wide variety of questions or give information on whom to contact for information.

In 1980 the Board had voted to hire a professional editor for the organization's publications. Terri Lonier resigned as Publications Chair in 1982 to accept the position of NCECA Journal Editor. She was responsible for the publication, design, and content, of at least one Journal, and several issues of the Newsletter produced annually. Both were distributed to all members, thereby fulfilling one of the early goals of the founders of NCECA.

Wichita State University in Kansas hosted the 1981 Conference from March 25-28. Bill Alexander was President. Attendance was 1100. The Program opened with the Keynote Address by Victor Papanek, Department of Design at Kansas City Art Institute and author of Design for the Real World.

The 1981 NCECA Journal reported on the broad range of the topics covered in the panels and slide lectures. A sampling: "Clay in Conjunction," dealt with sculptural uses of clay and was led by David Vertacnik who said, "Yes, there



*Reggie Brown and Mary Jane Edwards at NCECA Conference Booth*

is such a thing as ceramic sculpture. If we say we are sculptors then it is our responsibility to compete with sculptors working in all media. It's time to sever the ceramic umbilical cord". Val Cushing led the "Functionalism and Aesthetics" panel and opened the session with, "these forms must work as visually stimulating pieces. Interest must come from their organization and arrangement as artistic statements rather than their assessment as utilitarian objects". Other topics on the program were "Alternate Fuels," "Ceramic Education," "Salt-Glazing," "Sociology" and "Careers".

The two Major Exhibitions were "Michael Cardew," which was the first retrospective of his work in the United States, and the "Past-Presidents Invitational" with work by William Parry, Robert Turner, James Wozniak, Richard Peeler, Miska Petersham, Don Reitz, Don Frith, Warren MacKenzie, Dick Hay and Bill Alexander.

"Large-Scale Outdoor Sculpture" featured artists who generally work on a scale larger than life and it was discussed in a panel as well. "A Story of Three Pots: Juan Quezada and the New Palanganas Pottery Tradition" was an interesting exhibition of this Mexican Indian potter's work and was fully explained in a slide presentation documenting the show. "Interiors/Exteriors Invitational", a show of vessels, dealt with interior volume, decoration and alteration as well as exterior modification and decoration.

The 1982 Conference, held at San Jose State University, had as its theme THIRTY YEARS OF REVOLUTION IN CLAY. Val Cushing was President. About 1300 attended the meeting. The Program was well rounded, covering many different aspects of technical, aesthetic, historic and educational issues. A special publi-

cation, "NCECA: San Jose 82" was produced. The overleaf had a "family tree" that traced the evolution of West Coast colleges and their faculties from 1940 to 1980. It was a spectacular publication, filled with many reproductions, some in color, of work produced and exhibited during the preceding three decades.

The first day opened with "A Collage of the Times - 1950s", a dialogue among old friends Rudy Autio, Michael Frimkess, Fred Marer, John Mason, Mac McCloud, Susan Peterson, Ken Price, Jerry Rothman, Paul Soldner, Henry Takemoto, and Peter Voukos. It proved to be controversial.

A review of this "Collage" in the Summer 1982 Newsletter said, "Twenty years ago, had this infamous group of clay iconoclasts sat on a dark stage drinking booze, mumbling private jokes, and guffawing about how they used to hang out, an audience of 1200 ceramists would have been outraged...We watched in stupefied disinterest at the closed circle of aging turks. The sad, incomprehensible spectacle provoked no fury...In spite of the almost total failure of the event as theater or as education, that interminable 60 minutes of absurdity probably revealed more about Otis in the '50s than they even intended. What was exposed was an exclusive, almost incestuous club of macho, good-ol'-boy, inventive, energetic artists, who were oblivious to, or contemptuous of any need to communicate outside the circle...What we saw on the stage was the uncommunicative circle without the central energy...Paul Soldner was gracious, and was himself moved by the images from the past. He was active and working and risking a great deal on that stage. He did what he could to kindle a spark to get the old group chemistry working again."

Others apparently agreed with the criticism. In the Board minutes of April 8, 1982 it was emphasized that "there must be a formal, well-planned opening for conferences, with welcoming speeches, introductions, a keynote speech, and communication about the conference...There should be at least one event scheduled to which conferees are encouraged to actively contribute, by way of carefully structured discussion groups. Panels should be kept small and leadership guidelines given to panel leaders".

The second day's program focused on The 1960s with lectures and panels on various topics such as "Vessels: Figurative Concerns", "Corning Museum of Glass" and "Computerizing Glaze Formulas", as well as several workshops. The third day was about "Ceramic Art in California: the 1970s" with lectures on "Special Clay Bodies" and "Glass". Panels covered "Contemporary Clay: Art Makers and Art Critics", Community Colleges, Galleries, Patrons, Space Age Kiln Materials and Marketing. About fifty exhibitions were available for viewing in the area. The total conference was breathtaking to many.

An important change in the Constitution was made at the second members meeting of this Conference. The proposal to restructure the Board, as discussed at the Board Meeting the previous fall, was published in the Newsletter and sent out before the San Jose Conference. At the membership meeting, the following changes were approved:

Two year terms:

President

Past-President (to include Rules, Nominations and Honors)

President-Elect (External Liaison with other organizations and NCECA public relations)

Three year terms:

- Secretary/Treasurer (to include membership)
- Publications (Newsletter and Journal)
- Exhibitions
- Program (to include technical and curriculum)

1 year terms (appointed by President): Conference Chair  
Conference Chair-Elect

2 year term - Three Directors at Large

All of Board Members under the new structure were finally in place by 1985 when all incumbent officers had completed their terms.

In 1983 the Annual Conference was held at Georgia State University in Atlanta under the able leadership of Marge Levy as President for her first year. Joan Mondale made the introductions at the Opening Session. Philip Rawson, Dean of the School of Art and Design, Goldsmith's College, University of London, who gave the Keynote Address said that, "True form is a focal target higher than any simple category of shape. You only reach it through structuring the grammar and expressive idiom of your language...It can only have come out from within you as a person; and yet you may never have known it was waiting there to come out...It cannot be stated except in terms of qualities you give each pot; but it does exist as a kind of static design-plan. And you cannot command it in a single sweep, or seize it by an act of aesthetic rape."

The Program covered a broad range of topics: there were eight technical panels, five on aesthetics including social criticism, several on history and folk art and three on the business of ceramics. Issues in education were covered by presentations on "Non-Degree Ceramic Programs" and "Teachers As Artists and Potters." "Health Protection in Ceramics" addressed ventilation and other production problems and low-cost solutions. Demonstrations and a Ceramic Film Festival completed the program. The "NCECA Juried Members Exhibition" was the first show to travel and was documented with a catalogue. There were two exhibitions at Georgia State and twelve others in Atlanta museums and galleries.

Special Interest Groups were scheduled for the first time to fulfill the need for personal contact, since NCECA had grown too large for the kind of casual, spontaneous interaction possible when the organization was smaller. In the early years every one knew one another. NCECA members attended committee meetings and become involved in a variety of activities they believed contributed to the organization. Their work continued between annual meetings and provided on-going contact with NCECA throughout the year. This was no longer the case with the ever growing number of members. The SIGs were developed to fill the gap that resulted from the Board's restructuring and consolidation that eliminated several of the Standing Committees.

The 1984 Annual Conference was held in Boston, sponsored by the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston University's Program In Artisanry, and the Massachusetts College of Art. Prior to the NCECA Conference, the International Academy of Ceramics met in Boston. Some of their members joined NCECA Conference activities.

The 1984 Theme, EAST COAST CLAY EVOLUTION, focused on the New England ceramic tradition, its ties with Europe, and its development from Colonial times through today's computer age. The well-rounded Program included eight presentations on education, five on history, six dealing with philosophical issues, and six on technical matters. There were more than 45 clay exhibitions scheduled in museums and galleries as well as in schools and colleges, in Boston and nearby cities.

Noteworthy thoughts were expressed in "The University Impact on Ceramics" Panel. Mel Bernstein: "The University impact on ceramics was to methodize it, institutionalize it, democratize it and to dignify it". Ted Randall: "There has always been a stable, conservative center to pottery, from Jomon to California Funk, serving as a counterpoise to fantasy and keeping pottery in balance as an art form. Pottery has a historical meaning accruing from the past that has always been grounded and proscribed by Causality, Process, Function, Utility, Purpose and Necessity ...These concepts work together like cogs in a watch-works. Turn one and you turn them all. 'Function' works with all the others to build a broad, rich, stable meaning, inherent in pottery and far beyond the simple mechanical whatsis for a whosis we too glibly attach to the term 'functional pottery'. Perhaps it is this core of accrued meaning, seemingly immutable in pottery, that has enabled the play of innovation, countervailed it, prevented it from the self destruction of the avant-garde impulse in other art forms".



*Left to right; Babara Diduk, Mel Bernstein, Ted Randall and Dan Rhodes at 1984 Conference in Boston.*

The Washington University School of Fine Arts in St Louis was the site of the 1985 NCECA Conference, April 3-6. Lenny Dowhie became President for two years. The Theme was CERAMIC ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE. The Opening Address was given by James Wines, president and co-founder of SITE, an architectural and environmental arts organization in New York City. He spoke on "Architecture as a Source of Inspiration, Architecture as Place."



There were many panels and lectures covering the integration of ceramics and architecture — historically, technically and philosophically. Business aspects basic to the discussion were covered in "Large Scale Work: Presentation/Installation/ Documentation" and "Business Law for the Ceramist". Demonstrations were on-going throughout the Conference. They covered techniques of construction that ranged from making teapots and Ziggurats out of thrown forms to the building of large sculptural pieces and wall murals. The greater St. Louis area had more than 31 NCECA related exhibitions.

The Special Interest Groups had grown to 26, as a result of the members' eagerness to have this opportunity to meet in small groups and discuss ideas that were relevant to them and their professional situations. Topics covered a variety of attitudes toward education, social significance of ceramics, the marketplace, aesthetics, and functionalism.



*Special Interest Group Discussion.*

The 1986 Annual Conference was hosted by the University of Texas and the Southwest Craft Center in San Antonio, March 19-22. About 1400 people attended. The Theme was PROFESSIONALISM AND EDUCATION IN THE ARTS. The Opening Address was given by Philip Yenawine, Curator of Education at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, on "Functions of Art/Art of Functions."

In keeping with the theme, there were lectures on "Personal Computers: Artist/Educator's Tool", "Towards a New Curriculum", and "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Educating Artists". Professionalism was addressed in the panel discussion on "Un-Making It (Careerism is a Moral Dilemma for Artists in the '80s)". Panels on aesthetics included "To Make the Right Mistake" and "Exhibitions as Critical Discourse." Historic topics included: "The Potter Priest of India" and "Space in Mayan Vase Painting."

"Kids Clay '86", a National juried show of secondary school students' work held in conjunction with the NCECA Conference, was augmented by the panel, "On Kids, Clay, and Artists."

The University of Texas hosted four on campus exhibitions, including "Site Specific Adobe Sculpture Installations" and the "NCECA Student Invitational". In addition to the "NCECA Juried Members Exhibition" at the San Antonio College, there were about 20 clay shows in galleries around the city.

The Conference was wrapped up with the FIRST Tony Hepburn PRO cer-AM Golf Tournament and Awards Dinner.

The Everson Museum in Syracuse hosted the 1987 NCECA Conference from April 8-11 with Jerry Horning as President. The Theme was CERAMICS IN THE ART WORLD. NCECA and the Empire State Crafts Alliance had overlapping conferences that year, making it possible to co-sponsor a number of events. The Key-note Address was given by art critic Hilton Kramer on the subject "Where Are We Now? Art and Criticism in the 1980s". Donald Kuspit, the Closing Speaker, talked about "Observations on the Significance of Ceramics"

Conference presentations covered a wide range of topics, such as "Object and Image in Ceramic Art", "Abstraction and Empathy in Modern Ceramics", "Dealers in Context (growth of art as investment)", "The Role and Relevance of Pottery in Contemporary Society" and "The Great Debate: Can Craft Be Avant-Garde?"

The "Syracuse National", which had been reinstated after many years' absence, opened at the Everson Museum to coincide with the NCECA Conference. Syracuse University sponsored two major shows at the Lowe Art Center: "Potters' Potters" and a retrospective exhibition of the work of Ted Randall, the man whose insights and ideals had helped to form the foundation upon which NCECA was built.

Earlier that year the NCECA Board of Directors had established an Endowment Fund, to be supported by member's contributions, for the purpose of sponsoring a special presentation at annual meetings in honor of Ted Randall. It would celebrate his visionary approach to life and work and honor his special contribution to American ceramics, in general, and NCECA, in particular. The intent of the "Ted Randall Lecture" is to broaden awareness and appreciation of other creative achievements by inviting a distinguished artist, writer, performer, philosopher or scientist to give a special presentation to the membership. The speaker for the 1987 Randall Session was Lillian Schwartz, best known for her use of computers in graphics, film, video, animation and special effects.

At the Meeting of the Board in May 1987, the commitment to a broad programmatic perspective including technical, aesthetic, philosophical, educational and historical topics at annual conferences was reaffirmed. Mary Jane Edwards addressed the problem of finding a well qualified person willing to serve as President Elect because of the six year commitment. She recommended hiring a person to handle grants, administrative planning and conference responsibilities. This paid position would be in addition to those of Journal Editor and Executive Secretary. As a result, Minerva Navarrete was appointed Conference Planner in 1988 to alleviate some of the burden from the President and Program Chairs.

The next Board Meeting was held in Kansas City in October 1987. Discussion continued on the role of NCECA national and international programming and the ramifications of a Canadian serving on the existing Board. It was determined

that in the interest of NCECA maintaining its charter as a national organization, its 501-C-3 legal status as a non-profit organization and remaining qualified for federal and state funding, that the By-Laws should be changed. For this reason it was moved and passed "that any member in good standing, who is a U.S. citizen can be nominated or appointed to serve on the Board."

In 1988, the Oregon Art Institute in Portland hosted the NCECA Conference from March 16-19. Jerry Horning was President. The Theme was EAST MEETS WEST. Many aspects of the program were planned to explore this theme. The Korean presentations were made possible through the efforts of Dong-Hun Chung. He arranged throwing demonstrations at the conference and the Gilgama Project, a pre-conference event that consisted of building a traditional Silla style kiln and firing it with wood. Yukio Yamamoto, master potter from Japan, demonstrated brush



*Korean Potter demonstrating at 1988 Conference in Portland, Oregon.*

calligraphy and showed how he made some of his three-dimensional calligraphic and sculptural forms in clay. The Panels on "From the Inside Out: An Exploration of Life and Art Nurtured by Two Cultures" and "Korean Ceramics: Traditional and Modern" as well as the exhibitions: "East Meets West", "Korean Ceramics" and "Contemporary Japanese Ceramics", were among the many cross-cultural events.

Eliot Eisner, Professor of Art and Education at Stanford University, was the Key-note Speaker. He dealt with "The Value of Education in the Arts" in which he discussed his work in developing discipline-based art education. Several educational presentations gave alternative points of view. The Ted Randall Lecture, "The Very Idea of Art", was given by Ted Cohen, Professor of Philosophy, University of Chicago. In an interview following the talk, he said, "The job is not for a ceramist to prove that what she's making is art. The job is for somebody who thinks this stuff isn't art to tell us why not."

More than 50 galleries throughout Oregon participated by holding clay exhibitions. The Juried Members' Exhibition and the Student Exhibition were sponsored by NCECA. Shuttle Bus Tours, which had their beginning in Atlanta in 1983, were continued here.

1989 marked the second time that the Kansas City Art Institute hosted the NCECA Conference. Mary Jane Edwards was serving her first term as President. The Theme was CROSSROADS. As usual there was an abundance of planned events. Panel topics were diverse and covered aesthetics, history education and technique. They carried out the theme in presentations such as "Crossroads: Student Dilemmas for the 90s", "On the Yellow Brick Road Today: Do the Roadsigns Indicate a Crossroad, an Intersection, 'Closed for Repair', or a Maze?" and "Ceramic Tradition: Africa to America". Education was specifically addressed in the panel session "Pottery Teaching in the University: Yes, No, Maybe?".

The panel on "Raku: Transforming the Tradition" was also the title of an exhibition co-curated by Jay Lacouture and Rick Hirsch. It was a major event with a catalogue of the pieces in the show as well as examples of traditional tea vessels. The history and evolution of recent raku was well documented by the writings of the curators and some of the participants in the exhibition. A Raku Firing was a treat offered to the conference participants outside the ceramics building where they could enjoy the warm spring weather while watching the demonstration.

The Ted Randall Session was a pleasant departure from the usual lecture format. In keeping with Randall's love of classical music, a concert of Beethoven Sonatas for piano and cello was performed by Elizabeth Anderson and Cynthia Siebert in All Soul's Unitarian Church.

For the first time, Networking Sessions were held. Kit Cornell of "Studio Potter Network", opened the discussion by talking about "Networking: Contacts and Connections for the Ceramic Arts". In addition, there were 27 Topical Interest Groups (formerly "Special Interest Groups") dealing with careers and how to make a living, educational issues, health hazards in ceramics, and philosophical concerns.

At the first Members' General Session in Kansas City, Mary Jane Edwards introduced a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would create a new Standing Committee on Education: "This new Board position, Education Chair, is proposed in response to the membership and the educational climate in the creative arts community."

At the General Meetings held March 9, the Education Committee Proposal was tabled, due to the lack of a quorum. At the Second meeting on March 11, the proposal was removed from the agenda and an ad hoc committee was formed to pursue this position. John Hartom was appointed chair of that Committee.

The 1990 NCECA Conference in Cincinnati was hosted by the Arts and Education Community in Ohio and Kentucky. This was the first meeting to be held without a host institution. The Theme was REDISCOVERY. About 1800 registered for the conference and the Membership was approximately 1900. The Keynote was delivered by Roger Lipsey on "Conversations with the Kiln God".

The Conference truly adhered to its theme of Rediscovery. The "Open Forum, Education Speakout: Education Issues for the 90s" was a unique session in which members were asked to address issues, concerns, problems and opportunities directly related to education. This, coupled with the proposed amendment to add an Education Chair to the Board, indicates that perhaps NCECA once again feels the need to directly deal with a greater emphasis on education.

The "Current Ceramic Design Situations" panel discussed who designs for the U.S. ceramic industry and included industry panelists. "Contemporary Artists and Industry in the United States" dealt with the role of artists and designers working in industry; both were attempts to offer alternatives to becoming production potters or teachers.

Of the eight demonstrations, four had as their primary focus drawing on clay. Demonstrations on "Plaster, Lathe, and Tile Techniques" and "Press-Mold Relief Tiles" would seem to be yet another rediscovery of techniques that were part of the ceramic art curricula in the fifties.

The NCECA Juried Members Exhibition was installed at the Taft Art Museum. There were more than 25 exhibitions in Cincinnati museums and galleries. William Heyen, Professor of English and Poet in Residence at SUNY College at Brockport, NY, was the Randall Speaker. He addressed "The Green Gate: Ecology and the Artistic Imagination". The Closing Presentation was Blues guitarist Paul Geremia performing country blues, early jazz songs (1920s-30s), and original compositions.

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NCECA is now 25 years old. The 1991 Annual Conference at Arizona State University in Tempe marks its silver anniversary. Jay Lacouture took over the gavel of President at the last Members' Meeting in Cincinnati. The theme, NCECA - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE represents the importance of the occasion of this historic meeting.

Each year the Conferences have become bigger and better. It is a phenomenon similar to building a pyramid: the bigger the base, the higher it can be built. The Program varies with the site and the theme, but members expect certain kinds of events, such as the Ted Randall Endowed Session. The Annual Conference opens with a Keynote Address and, now, generally features a Closing Presentation. The opportunity to meet for informal discussions will be available through Topical Interest Groups and Networking Sessions. Many panels and lectures will be held concurrently, so once again decisions must be made as to which one to attend. More than 30 exhibitions in area museums and galleries will attempt to show all aspects of ceramics today. The NCECA Clay National Exhibition has become a reality and will be installed at the Arizona State Art Museum. Thursday and Friday Demonstrations will be on-going at three sites.

It seems as though NCECA has come a long way in its short 25 years. However, it is not about to rest on its laurels. Just as there have been Board Meetings in the past to question the direction, aims and goals of the organization, another such meeting is planned for the fall of 1991. A recent NCECA Newsletter describes the Future Planning Session at Salve Regina College in Newport, RI. Jay Lacouture has asked members to consider a variety of questions and to make their concerns known to the Board.

Ted Randall described his early involvement in the formation of NCECA as a way "To set up a forum for immediate, face to face, exchange of thoughts and feelings about ceramics — teaching and making". How can NCECA improve the services that have grown out of these objectives? Should conferences be held without any exhibitions, away from an urban center, so participants can concentrate on the dialogue about ceramics and education? Should smaller regional meetings be held? How can students be better served? Should ceramic curricula teach pottery, throwing and technical information, as well as the aesthetics of ceramics? These questions, plus many others, are future agenda topics that should be considered by all NCECA members.

#### EPILOGUE: NCECA and the American Ceramic Society — 1966-1990

In 1966 NCECA voted to separate from the American Ceramic Society; in 1970 the ACS initiated discussions on the possibility of the two organizations working together and once again merging. By 1974, the two organizations were working toward establishing a mutually beneficial relationship.

At the annual technical meeting of the ACS in Chicago, April 28-May 2, 1974, NCECA sponsored a three hour session on ceramic art and artists, in which the featured artists discussed their personal viewpoints about clay. A National Invitational Ceramic Art Exhibition of approximately 45 works by 15 ceramic artists was on display during the four days of the ACS Conference, with most of the costs covered by the ACS.

During the next four years the ACS sponsored one-man shows honoring an outstanding ceramic artist. The NCECA Board of Directors nominated six people each year; the ACS selected their awardee, who was given a show and was expected to make a presentation for the ACS membership. Shows were awarded to Don Reitz in 1975, Don Pilcher in 1976, Val Cushing in 1977 and Rudy Autio in 1978. NCECA supported these in the amount of \$500.

In November 1976, the ACS asked NCECA if it was interested in re-establishing a Design Section for the artist-potter within the ACS. They hoped that NCECA members would join, but there was no great response. They were also planning to set up a Ceramic Museum in Columbus, Ohio and were preparing a Policy regarding Shows at ACS Conventions.

In September 1977, the ACS wrote to ask NCECA to take over the cost of their shows at ACS meetings at a cost of \$750 to \$1000 if they wanted them to continue. On October 10, 1978 NCECA decided to discontinue all financial support for exhibitions by its members at Annual ACS Meetings.

The NCECA Liaison Committee was asked to re-examine the relationship with ACS. At the Executive Board Meeting on May 24, 1980 NCECA decided to end discussions of liaison with the ACS. They noted in the past it had "a certain nostalgia value, as NCECA was formed from the Design Division of ACS, but it is no longer viable...We have nothing to offer each other."

However, in 1989 representatives of the ACS wrote to NCECA regarding a need for ceramic artists in industry. This was considered to be important; thus, a panel/lecture was scheduled for the 1990 NCECA Conference on "Current Ceramic Design Situations." The discussion was about the relationship of artist, educators, industrial designers and customers.

The hope has been expressed that cooperative leadership may be established between the American Ceramic Society and NCECA to advance ceramic design in America.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Novelists tend to fall in love with their characters; historians with elements of time and progress. Clay artists who write histories might be accused of possessing a certain schizophrenic duality. In my case, the result was a singular renewal of my appreciation for the importance of ceramics and its place in the twentieth century. I had forgotten what it was like to be a ceramist in the 1950s when people thought that we bought molds at the local hobby shop and made ashtrays. I had forgotten the struggle that we have gone through over the last 40 years in order to gain recognition as professional artists.

Fortunately, I had my first experience with clay as the student of Dorothy and Lyle Perkins at the Rhode Island School of Design and, through them, knew only a professional attitude toward ceramics. I am indebted to them for their assistance in providing me with information not available from other sources and their continued interest in my activities over the years.

I am grateful to Jay Lacouture, formerly my student, and now president of NCECA, for his support of my proposal to work on this project and to the NCECA Board for sponsoring its publication. Regina Brown, Executive Secretary, has always been available to provide valuable information and understanding of the organization, its members and activities.

I especially appreciate the help of past presidents who responded to my letters and gave me information about their personal and unique experiences gained while serving the organization. Thanks go to Don Frith, Warren MacKenzie, Karl Martz, Bill Parry, Richard Peeler, Lyle Perkins, Miska Petersham, Norm Schulman, and Bob Turner.

Many NCECA members deserve special credit. Val Cushing was most helpful, meeting with me many times to discuss the organization and its early development. Anna Callouri Holcombe was always available with all kinds of useful information and photographs. Angela Fina offered her insights gained through ten years as NCECA secretary. Paula Winokur and Clayton Bailey sent valuable information and slides. Pete Dahoda and George Kokis answered the call for material for the NCECA Archives by sending their files for my use on this project, before consigning them to the Archives. Harris Deller, Vivika Heino, Rick Hirsch and Bob Schmitz shared their personal knowledge gained from their years of association with NCECA.

At the Scholes Library, Alfred University, Bruce Connolly, Director of the Library, and Elizabeth Gulacsy, Archivist, were most helpful in finding information and letting me use the Archives after hours.

Bob Holcombe provided advice throughout the planning stages and executed the graphics for the publication.

Lastly, without the long hours of editing and helpful assistance of Ed Howell, fellow RISD classmate and kindred spirit, this project would never have been completed.

Harriet E. Brisson  
Rhode Island College  
February, 1991

## HONORARY MEMBERS

Andreson, Laura, 1976  
Arneson, Robert, 1979  
Autio, Rudy, 1977  
Balsham, Leah, 1991  
Ball, F. Carlton, 1976  
Bearnson, Dorothy, 1991  
Black, Harding, 1991  
Brown, Bill, 1983  
Cardew, Michael, 1980  
Cox, Dr. Paul E., 1969  
Daley, William, 1983  
Duckworth, Ruth, 1981  
Earl, Jack, 1990  
Grotell, Maija, 1972  
Hartsook, Jane, 1983  
Heino, Vivika & Otto, 1982  
Hunt, William, 1985  
Karnes, Karen, 1980  
Kohler, Ruth, 1990  
Leach, Janet, 1988  
Leedy, James, 1989  
Lewis, Lucy, 1991  
Littleton, Harvey, 1972  
Marer, Fred, 1982  
Martinez, Maria & Julian, 1976  
Mason, John, 1974  
McKinnell, Nan & Jim, 1977  
Melcher, James, 1978  
Merritt, Francis, 1974  
Mondale, Joan, 1979  
Nelson, Glenn, 1982  
Olmstead, Anna, 1972  
Paak, Carl, 1991  
Pitney, William, 1991  
Rhodes, Daniel, 1973  
Richards, M.C., 1990  
Sanders, Herbert, 1975  
Scheier, Mary and Edwin, 1991  
Schreckengost, Victor, 1980

Senska, Francis, 1979  
Soldner, Paul, 1989  
Staffel, Rudolf, 1986  
Turner, Robert, 1978  
Voukos, Peter, 1972  
Webb, Aileen Osborn, 1973  
Welsh, Bennett, 1988  
Williams, Gerry, 1984  
Wood, Beatrice, 1987  
Wildenhain, Marguerite, 1972

## FELLOWS OF THE COUNCIL

Alexander, William, 1983  
Bailey, Clayton, 1982  
Brown, Regina, 1987  
Cushing, Val M., 1973  
Dowhie, Lenny R., 1986  
Edwards, Mary Jane, 1988  
Ferguson, Ken, 1981  
Fina, Angela, 1984  
Frith, Don, 1972  
Hay, Dick, 1977  
Jack, Marlene, 1989  
Kokis, George, 1977  
Lakofsky, Charles, 1972  
Levy, Marge, 1981  
Lonier, Terri, 1985  
MacKenzie, Warren, 1982  
Martz, Karl, 1972  
Nisbett, Jack, 1978  
Parry, William, 1991  
Peeler, Richard, 1973  
Perkins, Lyle & Dorothy, 1971  
Randall, Theodore, 1970  
Reitz, Don, 1976  
Winokur, Paula, 1983  
Winokur, Robert M., 1983  
Woznik, James, 1973



Wittenbrin, Marguerite, 1973  
 Wood, Beatrice, 1987  
 Williams, Gery, 1984  
 Wehr, Bennett, 1988  
 Webb, Alison Gibson, 1978  
 Voukac, Peter, 1973  
 Varner, Robert, 1978  
 Stoffer, Rudolf, 1988  
 Solbrig, Paul, 1988  
 Sander, Francis, 1978

FELLOWS OF THE COUNCIL

Alexander, William, 1983  
 Bailey, Clayton, 1983  
 Brown, Regina, 1987  
 Cushing, Val M., 1973  
 Downie, Jenny R., 1986  
 Edwards, Mary Jane, 1988  
 Ferguson, Ken, 1981  
 Fine, Angela, 1984  
 Gill, Don, 1972  
 Hay, Dick, 1977  
 Jack, Monera, 1989  
 Katz, George, 1977  
 Kibbey, Charles, 1973  
 Lacy, Maige, 1981  
 Laker, Tom, 1988  
 Mackenzie, Warren, 1982  
 Mohr, Karl, 1973  
 Nebel, Jack, 1978  
 Perry, William, 1991  
 Pester, Richard, 1978  
 Perkins, Ite & Dorothy, 1971  
 Rendon, Theodora, 1970  
 Ross, Don, 1978  
 Kinross, Paula, 1983

HONORARY MEMBERS  
 Anderson, Louis, 1978  
 Amerson, Robert, 1979  
 Auld, Judy, 1977  
 Baldwin, Leah, 1991  
 Bell, S. Carlton, 1988  
 Bestman, Dorothy, 1991  
 Black, Harding, 1991  
 Brown, Bill, 1983  
 Cadwall, Michael, 1980  
 Cox, Dr. Paul E., 1989  
 Daley, William, 1983  
 Dackworth, Ruth, 1981  
 Earl, Jack, 1990  
 Grottel, Stella, 1973  
 Hartrock, John, 1982  
 Hahn, Vivian & Otto, 1982  
 Hunt, William, 1985  
 Kainer, Karen, 1980  
 Korker, Ruth, 1980  
 Lucht, Janet, 1988  
 Leedy, James, 1989  
 Lewis, Lucy, 1977  
 Livingston, Marjory, 1973  
 Mares, Fred, 1982  
 Mathews, Maida & Julian, 1978  
 Mason, John, 1978  
 McDermott, Nora & Jim, 1977  
 Mitchell, James, 1978  
 Mott, Francis, 1978  
 Moseley, Joan, 1979  
 Nelson, Glenn, 1982  
 O'Connell, Anne, 1978  
 Park, Carl, 1991  
 Pines, William, 1991  
 Rucker, Daniel, 1978  
 Roberts, M.C., 1990

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