

# Kathy Whitley

Potter

Pink Hill, NC

My passion for clay started at a very young age. As soon as the rain stopped, I was outside playing in a puddle and making mud pies. I was the one in my family who stayed out on the beach at all hours digging holes and making castles. When I was twelve, I visited the Village of Yesteryear at the State Fair. I was fascinated by the woman from Seagrove who sat at the potters wheel and made many pots. I purchased my first piece of pottery that day, and I still cherish it. Now, I am making pots and have been a full time potter for thirty-five years. After majoring in art at East Carolina University and earning a BFA degree, I was fortunate to be able to work as an apprentice to a well-known potter. All of these experiences led me to a life of creativity with clay.

When my work is going well, I am filled with a sense of accomplishment. The fun and relaxing part for me is drawing, painting and carving into the clay. I get ideas from looking around me and thinking about what I can do. It comes quite naturally. When people see my work, I'd like for them to want to hold it, use it, display it and be proud to own it. Most of all, I want it to make them feel happy.

The most important part of the process is the firing. My gas kiln holds about two hundred pieces, so it takes a lot of time to get them made and glazed and loaded. On the morning of the firing, I get up at daybreak and walk over to the kiln outside my studio. As I walk, I can hear birds chirping, the dew hangs on the spider webs, the geese take off from the pond, our dog is stretched out on the deck by the back door, and the kitties are near the kiln sleeping. They await a warm spot. I light the kiln and head back to the house for coffee. It's going to be a good day. There is a peaceful feeling in the air and I can focus on a good firing. I will be watching the kiln every thirty minutes. As it heats up, I must read it well and make the changes necessary for a long oxidation period, the right amount of reduction at just the right time and even heat in the top and bottom. It will be a long day and I eagerly await the metamorphosis.

