

Jim: She was a welder during the second world war. Worked at Kaiser Shipyard, building Liberty ships. They hired lots of young girls in those days because they could get into places within all of the ship to weld where a man couldn't get his shoulders in. Used them for the tight work and the hard places. That's where she spent her early years.

Nancy: She strikes me as being sort of a tough, spunky gal. A survivor.

J: She came into the kiln room one time and found me doing a little welding job. Asked if she could try it. And she surprised me. She took the rod and the rod stuck. And she says give me a bigger rod and more heat. (laughs) With all of the heat I could put out of that machine, and a quarter-inch diameter rod, she could weld real well. It was a big surprise.

N: I'm surprised she hasn't worked in metal for her sculptures.

J: Once she discovered the clay, she stayed with it.

N: Yeah, I'm sure it's a lot easier and it gives her more detail.

J: Have you seen her originals? Ever seen any of her originals?

N: No, no I haven't.

J: She makes them in a castable red clay. And it's the same stuff that I made pottery out of in Mexico. When I quit the Mexico business, I gave her about, oh, I think, forty or fifty gallons of it, and she's still using it. I've been out of that for years.

N: Now, are you talking about the ones that are like real rough finish?

J: Yeah

N: OK, I've got a little burro, it's a standing burro that she did. I guess that might be one of the ones.

J: Yeah, if the basic body, look at the bottom of the feet, if the basic body is kind of a chocolate brown, then it's clay that I made in Tecate. She preferred to work in that stuff.

N: Uh huh. Yeah, the ears and the feet are dark brown. Interesting.

J: Yeah, that's Mexican clay.