

Success and Failure

# Ceramics Class Can Be Chaotic

By JANIE ERNST

There's a room on second floor Joyner that many Meredith college students never enter. The room is the art lab, and any Tuesday or Thursday between 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. finds it the crowded seat of much activity. At this time seventeen ceramics students fill the room already occupied by sculpture and oil painting classes.

The large group, however, is surprising in its enrollment, for all but one of the ceramics students are non-art majors. "You surely don't have to be artistic to take it," Velma McGee commented, "yet it lets you see just how creative you can be." Then laughing she added, "There's a bunch of history majors in there, and it's for sure that we aren't all talented!"

### Not Just a Hobby

However, their work is by no means a type of hobby. Extensive reading in the library is required, and the girls must use ideas gained through the reading in one of their project pieces. A minimum of five pieces is required of each student for the semester. These include a pinch pot, a coil pot, an incised pot, and a lidded pot. The course may sound like a class in "pot-making," yet students do work ranging from pitchers and vases to cups and banks. Ash trays, however, are strictly forbidden by Dr. Downs, the professor, who threatens to fail anyone who makes an ashtray. If asked why, he simply refers them to a favorite anti-nicotine article he has posted on the wall. Yet, he knowingly smiles when he says he's quite aware that many items to later serve as ashtrays are made under the innocent guises of small candy bowls or pin dishes.

Dr. Downs has gained the respect and affection of his students. Many speak of the wonderfully dry



Marilyn Maki shapes a coil pot of clay in the art lab.

wit which he is forever exhibiting, and others fondly make such comments as — "Oh, he's a bird; he really is." — "just love him" — and "funny as all get out." Who else but Dr. Downs when confronted with the problem of still wet pieces being handled and broken when left in the lab would hang a large sign reading:

**"KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF!!!**  
All works not yours. Pieces are continually being damaged by snoopers. If you want to handle clay sign up for the class."

### Many Problems

Yet "snoopers" is not the only problem facing the girls in ceramics. Two small kilns must serve the class of seventeen, and now, at the end of the semester, there is much scurrying about with fears that there may not be time to fire all pieces. Every item must be fired for a day, cooled for a day, glazed, and fired again. For experience, each girl is responsible for firing the kiln at least once. The task involves going over to the lab early to turn the kiln on — with the hope that all pieces will be done by dinner time so she may leave. Some girls have had trouble with pieces sticking together in the kiln. Mary Lou Davis had to file, partially re-glaze, and refire one of her pieces when one of the tiny tiles Ruth Armstrong was making for a mosaic-top table fell on the piece and stuck. Mary Lou, in fact, seems to have more than her share of troubles in ceramics. One of her little pots melted completely when left in the kiln too long. She is now also faced with the question of what to do about a sling-mold dish made by hanging clay in a burlap bag: it seems the piece is longer than the longest inside dimension of either kiln. The only hope now is to fire it tilted at an angle, and this may well prove tricky!

Large pieces are a general problem for the class. Some have been made that almost fill the entire kiln and have to be fired alone. The time consumed by such large pieces with just two small kilns for the large class has led Dr. Downs to declare, "Next year we're going to either have a larger kiln or smaller classes, or the girls are just going to make doll dishes!"

### Feeling of Accomplishment

Despite the trials and troubles they go through, ceramic students recommend the course. They take great pride in their work and enjoy having something to show at the end of a semester. In the words of Barbara Jean Radford, "Ceramics is really wonderful. It's a learning experience, and I find it completely relaxing. I feel that all the things I've made are part of me — even the Grecian urn I smashed until it was a flat vase." Bravely ignoring her past problems with the course, Mary Lou Davis said, "I love it 'cause we can do what we want. It's lots of fun." Nodding toward her work on a shelf in her room she added, "I think everyone should try it because you get stuff like that you can use and keep."

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# Criminology Class Gains New Insight About Prison Conditions through Tours

What makes a person commit a crime and how does society treat a person who is a deviant? These were the questions to which Mr. Preston Parsons and his criminology class sought the answers as they toured the penal institutes located in Raleigh. The class visited Woman's Prison on April 25. They were given an extensive tour which started at the admissions office where the criminals are orientated. The tour included a visit to the various workrooms. There were sewing rooms where uniforms were being made and canneries where food was being prepared which would later be used in school cafeterias and other government institutions. The class was told that by doing work such as this, the inmates feel that they are helping to pay their debt to society. The class then saw the living quarters of the prisoners. The honor system was explained to the group and they were told that those who had obtained the highest honor grade lived in individual rooms in cottages

around the prison grounds. The class was interested to learn how much freedom the inmates were allowed and were surprised not to find as many security precautions as they had expected. Many misconceptions which students had were dispelled because of this trip. Instead of finding drab cells, the girls saw spacious wards and cottages. The group saw television sets in each ward and realized that each inmate is given opportunity for contact with the outside world. There was a chapel for private meditation and a church which is attended by a high per cent of the prisoners.

In direct contrast to the Woman's Prison was Central Prison where a cross-section of criminals, ranging from the boy whose home is in the slums to the business man who comes from a respectable family, were housed in "dingy, horrible" cells. Again, the class began their tour in the orientation office. They were conducted through a room where many inmates were making state license plates. The school where it was possible for an inmate to receive a high school diploma was next on the tour. This work and schooling is intended as constructive rehabilitation for the individual. The group then viewed the gas chamber. At this point, their guide said that the prison officials felt that whipping, under controlled conditions, was better punishment than solitary confinement. The group was told that the prisoners had plastic coins, which are approved by the state government, to use as money. This precaution eliminates the possibility of bribery. The class learned that the incoming and outgoing letters are strictly censored. The guide explained that the prisoners have some type of entertainment each Saturday night and on holidays. This recreation includes movies, visiting entertainers, acts from the circus, and highlights from the fair.

### Snakes, Worms, Food Provide Week-end Fun

By POLLY FINAN

Two days of fun and excitement were enjoyed by the Community Recreation and Camp Leadership Class during the week-end of May 11 and 12. Under the guidance of Mrs. Helena Allen, this group of girls journeyed to William B. Umstead State Park for two days of pioneer living! While there, they planned their own menus and lived in an umbrella tent and several pup tents which they pitched themselves. Saturday night, guests for "vittles cooked in the open air" included Mr. Allen, little Ross Allen, and husbands of the married day students.

Also included in the experiences of the girls was an encounter, during a nature walk, with a snake, which was probably more frightened by the group than they were by him. Fishing with dig-them-yourself worms added to the fun, but not to the food supply, for Mr. Allen was the only one catching anything.

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