

My Memories of the Cookeville Pottery

by
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First, let me explain. My brother Raymond and I worked together at the pottery through our teenage years until I went into the Army in 1943 and he went into the Navy the following year.

Our first job for money was when Raymond and I contracted to mow this lady's yard for \$0.10. While we were mowing she set a pie on the window sill to cool for lunch. Needless to say, every time we passed that window that heavenly aroma from the pie caused us to make a deal with the lady: we finally wound up mowing her yard for \$0.05 and one piece of pie each.

After our yard mowing experience, we started working at the pottery everyday after school and on Saturdays for \$0.10 an hour.

The next memorable things I can remember about the pottery were:

Occasionally, Raymond and I, being boys and brothers, would get into a clay fight. That is, we would fill our hands full of soupy clay and throw it at each other. That was lots of fun until Raymond let go of a handful of clay at me; I ducked and the clay caught our foreman (Dudley Murray) in the face. Our reward was getting our heads ducked into a barrel of water.

After so many afternoons after school and summers, we finally learned to hand turn clay products and jigger clay products, glaze with color, and burn the kiln.

In applying color to the clay products, the glaze was made up of different chemicals, one being uranium oxide, which was suddenly unavailable by Government orders. This happened about the first of 1941.

Firing the kiln was about the hardest and hot job we finally came to. Firing wood and coal into the kiln's openings was a 3 day job (24 hours a day). Raymond and I fired the kiln from midnight to dawn. We would walk back to back around the kiln, so we would be ready for anything such as drunks or vagrants.

During the summer of 1941, Raymond and I made all the potteryware, glazed and burned two kilns by ourselves, and did the selling.