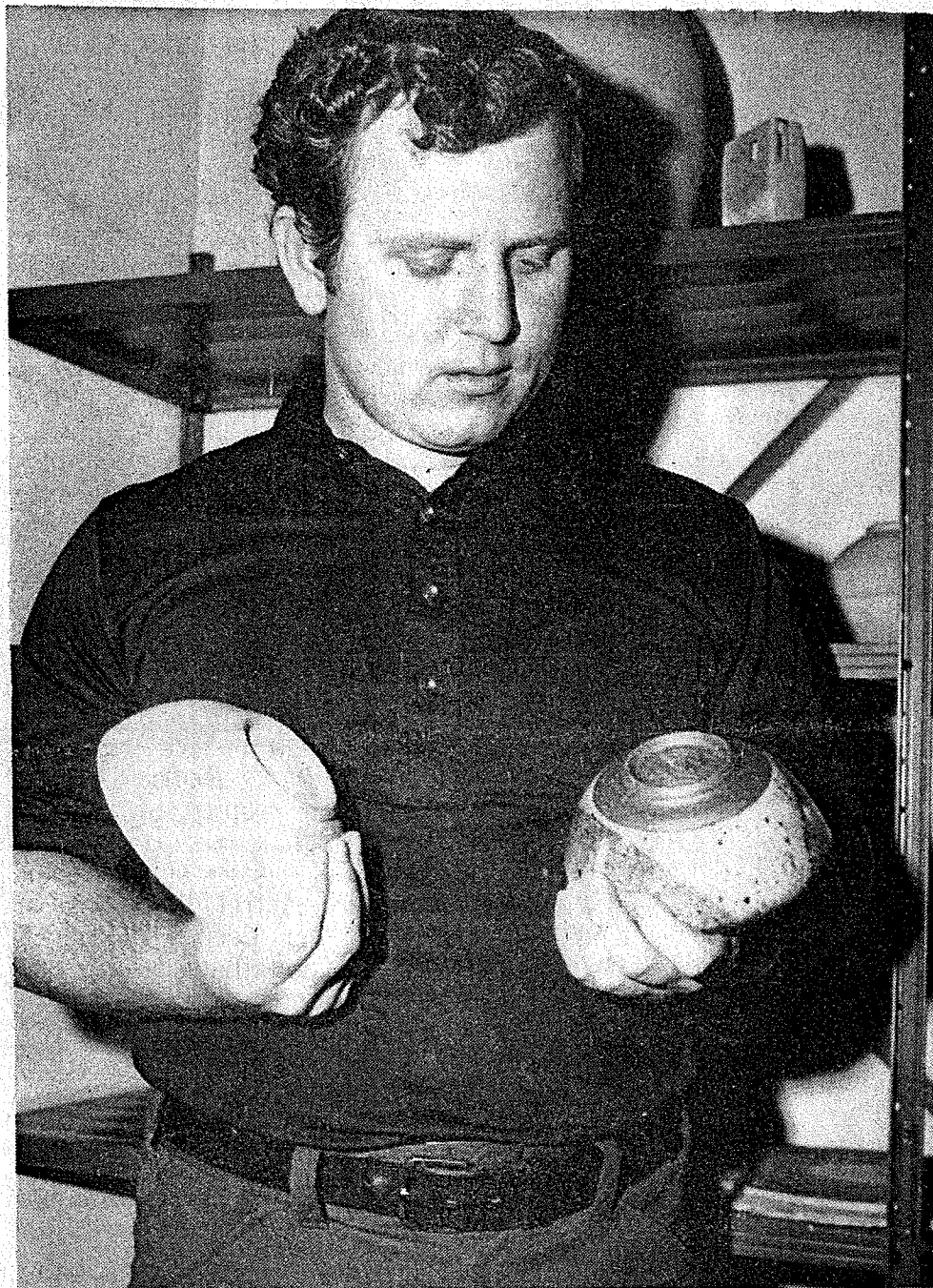


John Lonergan--he's



Greenware And Bowl



John Lonergan received a BFA from the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa in 1964, and began a career in commercial art. The commercial art career in Birmingham ended and Lonergan began teaching art in Pell City High School. His career as a potter began seven years ago when he had to teach ceramics in his classes and he started reading up on the subject.

Seven years later, with a great deal of reading; practice, study and experimentation with clays and firing processes, Lonergan is one of the foremost and advanced potters in this area of the state. His work is displayed and sold in Birmingham, Montgomery and Atlanta, Ga.

The quality of the ceramic piece depends on many variables, the clay used, the potter's skill in throwing a piece, the firing process, use of glazes and final firing with glaze.

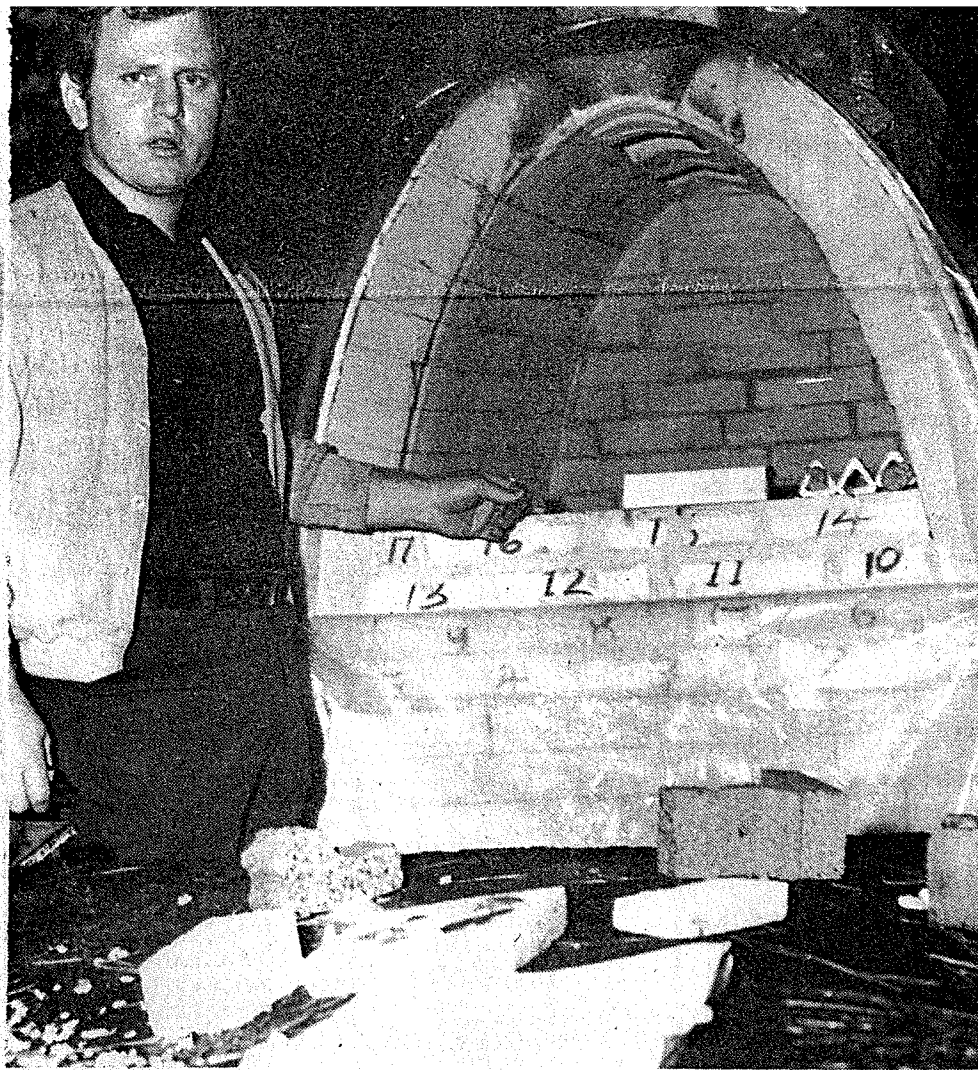
The clays which Lonergan uses vary and are rarely a pure form of clay, such as Prattville or Pittsburg or fire clay, but generally a mixture which is based on a recipe gleaned from a book, or the result of Lonergan's experimentations.

The use of clay is extremely important and each clay contributes a special element to the finished piece. Each recipe of clay mixes differently with the glazes. Even greater differentiation in coloration and texture can come from the process which the potter uses for firing.

Lonergan is one of the few potters in this area who is working with porcelain. Porcelain is one of the more difficult clays to work with because of its tight granular composition which makes it difficult to throw; it lacks elasticity which makes throwing easier.

Another difficulty in working with porcelain is the difficulty in working the walls of a piece thin enough for proper firing.

Lonergan is using reduction firing for glazes which is use of a gas burner and is an oxygen starved operation. The kiln



Reduction- Gas Kiln

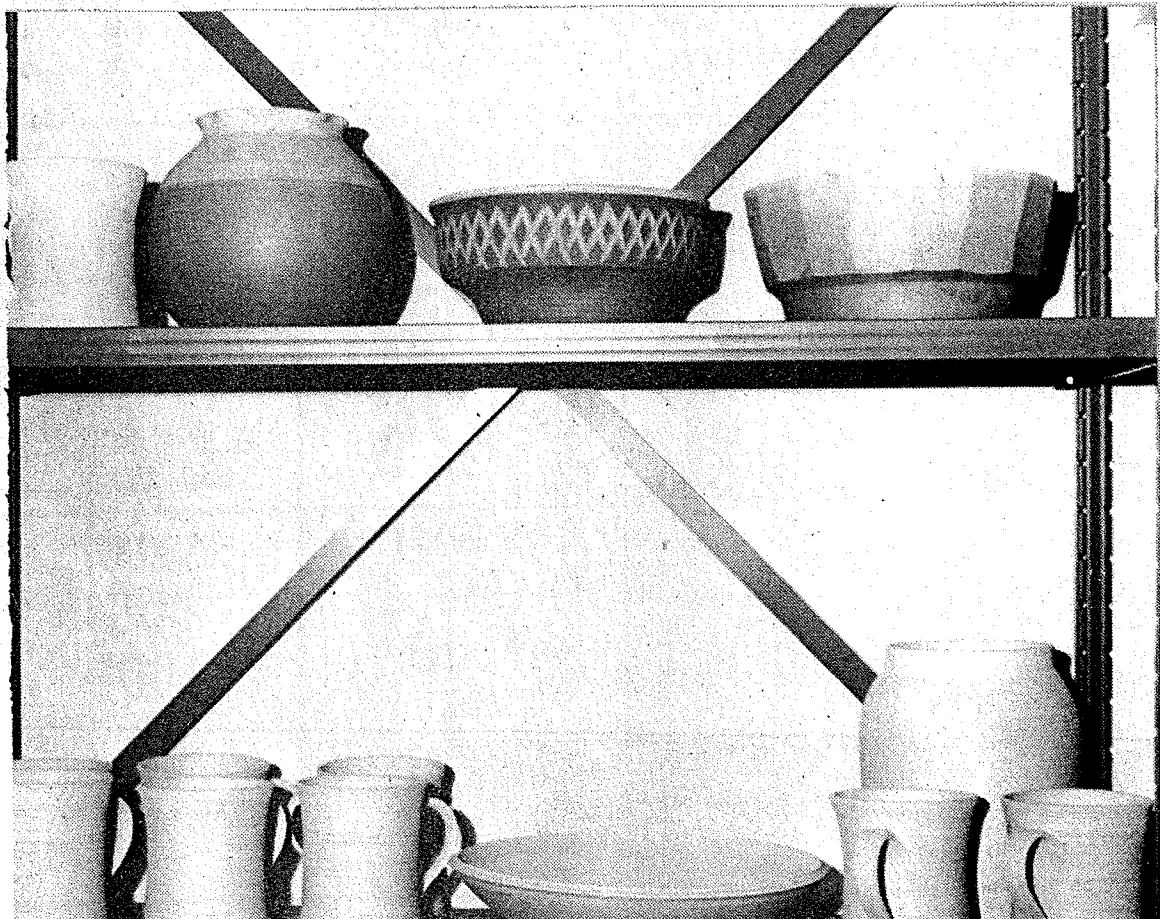
with porcelain is the difficulty in working the walls of a piece thin enough for proper firing. Lonergan is using reduction firing for glazes which is use of a gas burner and is an oxygen starved operation. The kiln permits determination of the use of the amount oxygen in the kiln; in reduction (high firing) there is a carbon reaction with the glaze which gives a different quality to the glaze and the finished product

Low firing makes for solid pottery, but stoneware and porcelain require high firing, which permits a strong interaction with the clay and the glaze.

Most of Lonergan's work is done on the potter's wheel as five to ten pots can be thrown in the length of time it takes to build a piece by hand.

When he throws, Lonergan generally knows what he wants to create at least 90 per cent of

**Story and
photos by
Jenna
Whitehead**



s one of the best

the time. If a piece doesn't work, he starts over.

Lonergan has gone through many trial and error stages, such as his work with platter. The thicker the base, the more likely a piece will crack in firing.

In discussing the spots which frequently appear on pottery, Lonergan pointed out that they are the impurities in the clay which interact with the glazes during the firing process, and they are desired, most generally, for their affect in the finished piece.

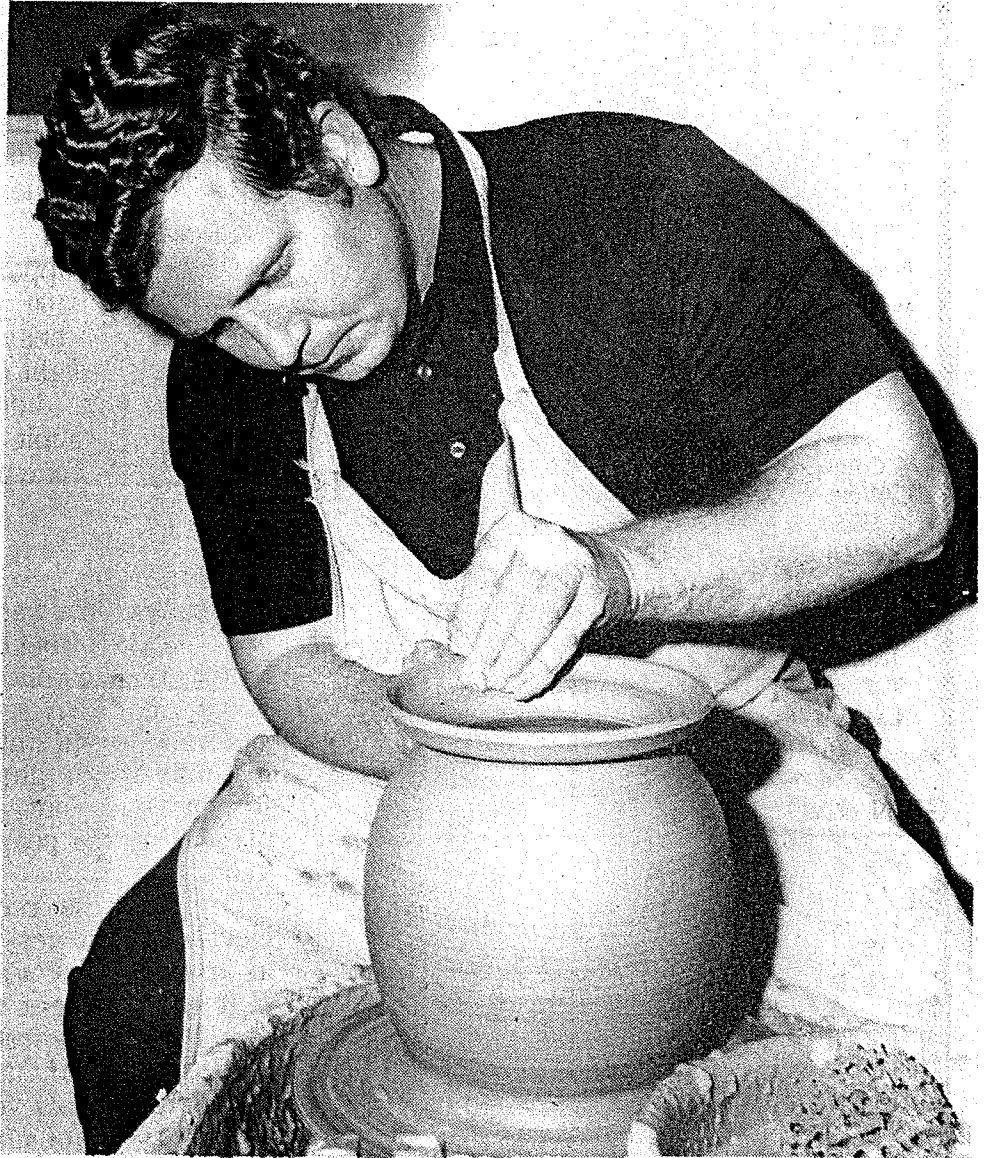
One of Lonergan's latest experiments is with a platter base thrown, platter part hand-built, coated with iron oxide and painted on the surface with engobe clay (regular old yard clay) which has been strained and watered down. The platter has not been fired and Lonergan is hopeful that it will be successful.

Another of Lonergan's present endeavors is work with plates. These are difficult to make because the thinness of the piece, subjects it to cracking and warping under fire.

Another of Lonergan's current experiments is a copper glaze which was used by the Chinese over three thousand years ago. Lonergan has two small vases made of the same clay, applied with the same glaze and fired at the same time, but one is grey with one red spotted area and the other is the beautiful copper red. The difference is explained because of placement in the kiln during reduction firing.

Lonergan has several methods for applying glazes to his pieces, which range from infrequently applying the glaze with a brush, to dunking in a glaze solution and then spraying the glaze on while the piece is being blown on by a fan. The effects are quite interesting and varied.

Lonergan also paints quite well and has sold his works statewide. He acknowledges that few artists have two such dissimilar areas of creativity, particularly if they try to do



Lonergan- Throwing A Pot



varied.

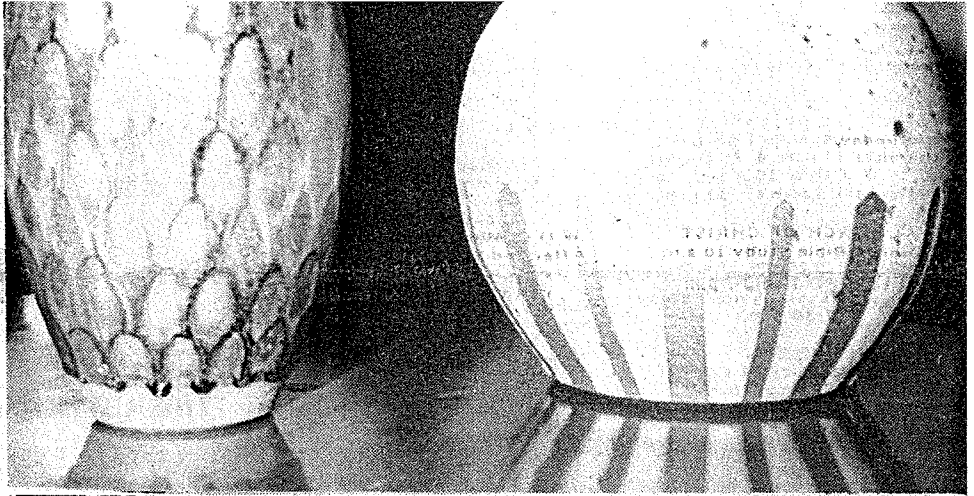
Lonerger also paints quite well and has sold his works statewide. He acknowledges that few artists have two such dissimilar areas of creativity, particularly if they try to do both equally well. Since Lonerger began pottery, his painting has not received the concentration he would prefer.

Lonerger exhibits at the Bluff Park Art Show, and the Botanical Gardens art show. He is a member of the Alabama Designer Craftsman Association and the Alabama Artists Association.

Most of the potters in the area are just beginning or have had no access to the necessary book and instruction, which Lonerger has had, and to which he attributes his success.

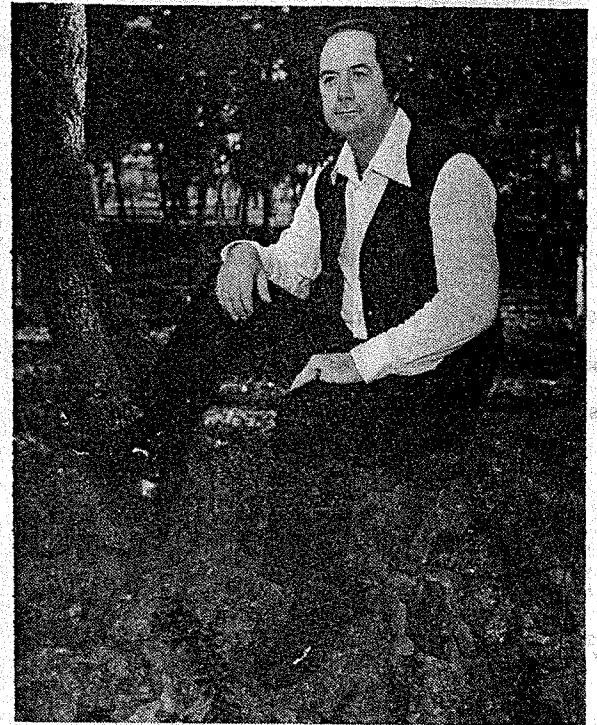
"We go to church, go to work and the rest of the time I'm generally working in the studio," said Lonerger.

That, undoubtedly, is a very large part of his success and outstanding work as a potter.



Same Glaze- Different Interaction

A shrunken garment sometimes can be steamed and stretched back into shape. But usually it reverts to its shrunken dimensions upon hanging for several hours.



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