

Potters build studio in the woods

When Dave and Sue Enna moved from Gresham to the Brightwood woods, they dismantled their kiln and took the bricks with them.

The Ennas are potters who have realized an ambition shared by many craftsmen—a quiet place to create.

Bumping along the rutted road on the way to the Ennas' studio, one wonders how the pottery gets out in one piece.

"We haven't broken one yet," Sue Enna said while husband Dave looked for a piece of wood to knock on.

They didn't want an industrial setting. They certainly don't have one. Theirs is a home occupation.

The name has been changed from Powell Valley Pottery to Enna Pottery, but the high standards of craftsmanship still apply.

Plans for the tri-level wooden studio were dreamed up and laid out while the couple threw pots on the wheel in a little shed on Powell Boulevard.

Converting the dream to windows and wood was something else.

"We built this studio ourself with the help of our friends," Dave said. "Getting this whole wall up in one piece was really something."

The cement slab was poured professionally, but the Ennas and friends did the rest.

"It took us twice as long and

cost twice as much as we planned," Sue shook her head. The project wasn't without its lighter moments.

"We kept measuring but everything was an inch off," Dave recalled. "It wasn't until the roof that we realized my grandfather's cloth measuring tape had shrunk."

The clerestory design has five tall windows with northern exposure letting light into the third level room where Dave throws the pots on the wheel. A specially designed machine kneads the clay and spews out just the right amount.

Enna Pottery is thrown to a uniform fraction of an inch for each design; a set of eight coffee mugs, for example, will be identical in size.

"You can't really perfect a design unless you throw hundreds of them," Enna, who met his wife while they were studying pottery in England, said.

The middle level of the 30 by 20 foot building is Sue's domain—the glazing and kiln room.

The first, or bisque, firing is done in a small electric kiln and the second firing is done in a large propane kiln ("It holds \$600 worth") in an open, roofed area attached to the studio. It is a big step up from the original kiln, whose brick door had to be rebuilt with each firing.

The Ennas worry the cat will creep into the warm kiln for a

nap. "We don't want a cat crematorium," Sue said.

The ground level is the finishing room where ropes are added to the hanging planters and pots are cleaned in preparation for sale. There is also a display area.

"This is a cookie jar for dieters," Dave held up a canister, whose lid was still stuck shut from firing.

If they had it to do over again, the Ennas probably wouldn't have those three flights of stairs.

"But working on different floors is probably what's kept our marriage together," Dave joked.

Utilitarian pottery is their specialty. They have designed and made dinnerware, casseroles and serving pieces—from huge bowls to cover boxes. It's the earthy, touchable kind of pottery.

Popular items include kerosene lanterns and hanging flower pots with built-in drainers. The flower pots are glazed on the outside but the inside is unglazed so roots can cling.

"There's really nothing new in pottery," Sue said. "We thought we'd invented these flower pots, but then we saw one like it on page three in a book at the Portland Art Museum. It'd been made in something like 1620 in Massachusetts."

Putting out good pottery isn't enough; the dishes have to put bread on the table.

Enna Pottery is sold at Gresham Gallery and Cloud-tree and Sun and the couple has attended arts and crafts fairs every weekend since May, putting more than 2,000 miles on their car.

They enjoy meeting old friends at fairs like Gresham Festival of Fine Arts and Sandy Mountain Festival.

"I really miss people dropping in to visit like they did in Gresham," Sue said.

The Ennas laugh about people's stereotypes of craftsmen.

"Some people seem kind of disappointed because we don't live in a commune," Sue said. "They're surprised when we tell them we have house payments and a dishwasher."

People sometimes have the wrong idea of craftsmen as businessmen.

"There's a huge barrier to overcome because some people think craftsmen aren't dependable," Dave said. "You have to be a businessman as well as a craftsman or you'd starve to death."

The entrepreneurs do have one thing most young marrieds with their own business don't have.

The brick path leading to their country home was once their kiln.



POTTERY STUDIO in woods near Brightwood was built by Sue and Dave Enna adjacent to their home. The tri-level structure offers the gift of solitude for the creation of Enna Pottery.



NATURAL LIGHT floods the top floor of Enna Pottery studio where Dave throws the pots on the wheel.



POTTERY KILN fired with propane gas will hold \$600 worth of pottery. Sue Enna loads the last of the commercial order for Medieval Inn. The weighted door just slides down for firing and the appendage to the studio has open sides to allow heat and fumes to escape.



HUGE LUMP of clay is transformed into a giant flower pot by Dave Enna, who studied the craft in England.



SUE ENNA says one of the big advantages of working in crafts is the wonderful trades you can make with other craftsmen. The Enna home is veritable museum of the works of other area artisans.



GUESS WHAT'S coming to dinner—Enna Pottery. Dave and Sue Enna design and make place settings, covered casseroles, flower pots, bowls, kerosene lanterns and the mugs you like to hold.