

## Denman Island's Dragonmaster

by Graham Brazier

Just a few days after the passing of Bentley Le Baron, one of Denman's well known potters, I visited our archives curious to know what we might have tucked away relating to Bentley's background on Denman Island.

What I found included a fragment of a newspaper article in an unnamed newspaper dated September 1985 which included the following statement: "Today the former doctor of philosophy, university professor and environmental consultant is making a business out of the dragons that he produces in his island [pottery] studio." And, judging from the accompanying photograph this was pleasing him very much. [Danni; please enter the photo here]

Another mysterious and undated tiny newspaper fragment found amongst the collection concludes: "Le Baron is planning an international dragon sculpture contest next year. The winning dragon will be cast in a kilo of gold, valued at \$15,000, the prize of a treasure hunt to be held near the Vancouver Expo site." No further information on that intriguing tidbit was found.

Finally, another undated document completed the collection of material on Denman's 'dragonmaster' potter. An impressive cardstock folder titled: **"A History of Pottery on Denman Island"** includes the following warm remarks by Jane Lighthall upon meeting Bentley Le Baron. *"Soon after Larry and I moved to Denman Island about 1983, he came home from a ratepayers meeting and told me that a potter wanted to move to our place.*

*According to Larry, Bentley had stood up at the end of the meeting and said he was going to have to leave Denman because he could not find a place to move his studio to from where he had been living on Margie's farm. My reaction was, "What? You asked a perfect stranger to move to our land?"*

*And so it was, we hashed out an agreement. Bentley finished our cabin, moved his studio by a trailer, pulled by a tractor with the backhoe pushing from behind. Le Baron studio sat for ten years on Corrigall Rd. until Bentley moved to his present location where he lives with Danni.*

*Bentley made a lot of dragons and mythological sculptures as well as lots of functional ceramics. He and his sister even had a store on Granville Island called DRAGON SPACE that he supplied with his pots. He has three lovely children who came and went. He was always very patient and forgiving when our children hung around his studio and played with clay or accidentally broke something." And that concludes the material in our archives on the more than forty years of Bentley Le Baron's life on Denman Island.*

The Denman Island Archives would welcome the donation of any relevant documentation of the life of Bentley Le Baron on Denman Island between 1979 and 2025.