

WATER MAN

Sometime during Ken Botnick's first week as director of Penland, a state engineer appeared in his office and informed him that the school was not in compliance with state water regulations. Ken quickly found out that Penland had been reclassified as a "community water system," which is governed by stringent and complex statutes. There's no grandfather clause for community systems, so a thirty-year-old network of springs, pumps, and plumbing had to be brought in line with modern regulations.

For starters, a community system cannot use low-lying springs, which Penland has depended on, regardless of water quality. Furthermore, the system has to be supervised, maintained, and monitored by a state-certified water-system operator. Contracting this service out would have been prohibitively expensive, but Bruce Mathis, who is on Penland's maintenance staff, offered to take on the job.

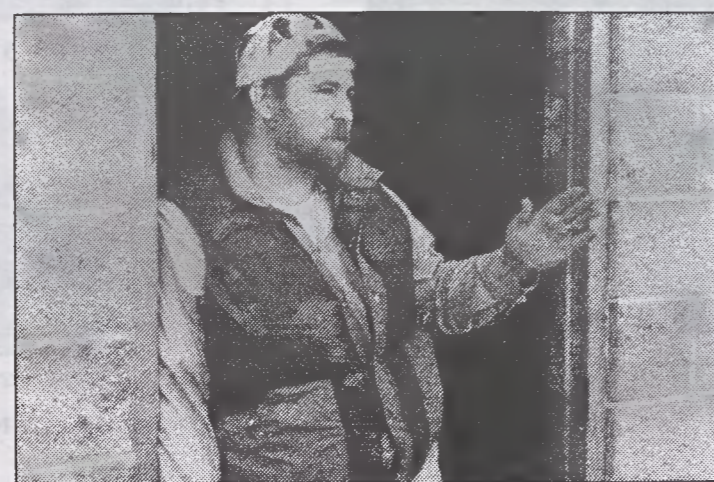
Bruce's college training was in mining technology, and he has a good background in chemistry and math. He spent several months studying the water codes and then went to Raleigh for a week of training and testing. After he got there he discovered that he'd been sent the wrong books, and he also learned that many of his classmates were making their third attempt at the test. "Bruce called from Raleigh, and said that it would be by the grace of God if he passed," Ken recalls. He did, and with flying colors.

Once he finished the training, Bruce cheerfully took on what turned out to be a huge responsibility. The school has contracted for new wells, a new pump house, and a second reservoir. Bruce is laying 5,000 feet of new water line to connect all these elements, and he will also be installing flow monitors on the wells and a chlorinator in the pump house.

Water samples must be taken on a regular basis, packed in ice, and shipped to the lab by overnight mail. Chlorine levels are monitored daily at the pump house and at the tap, and testing is done for bacteria, organic chemicals, and pesticide residues. Bruce reports regularly to the state and handles reams of paperwork.

All the new work must be completed by the beginning of spring Concentration, and Bruce will be working full-time on the water system until then. The maintenance staff is already hard pressed by the untimely death of Harold Jones, so they expect to have a busy winter. Ken reports, however, that putting these plans in motion, along with a high level of communication, has softened the state's initially adversarial stance.

Although his new responsibilities appear complex and intimidating, Bruce speaks with knowledge and confidence and says he's really enjoying the work. "He was heaven sent," Ken said, "and this has been a great opportunity for someone on the staff to step forward and move on with their professional education." So keep the pressure up, Bruce, because everyone's trying to shower.



Bruce Mathis



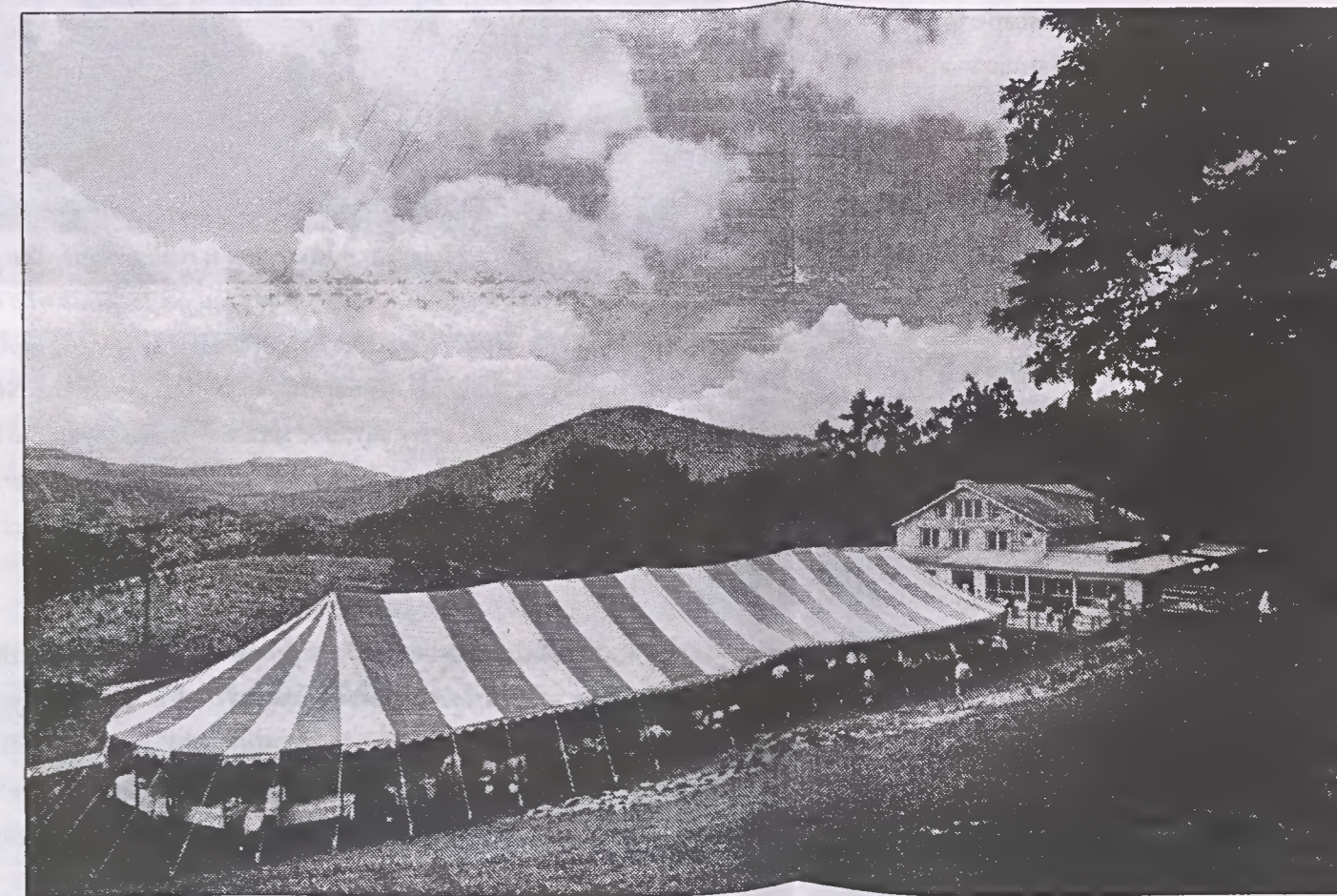
The Penland Benefit Auction, which raised over \$150,000 for the school this year, is more than just an art sale. It's an elaborately planned and executed party for the school's patrons, but it's more than that as well. At its best, the auction weekend is a celebration of the Penland community: a time when staff, students, friends, and neighbors all come together to work on a common project. Although a few cooks and coordinators are paid, much of the work is done by volunteers.

The tasks are myriad: an art show is designed and mounted; a huge tent is set up with tables, chairs, sound system, and drainage; guests are registered, valuable artwork gets carried from the display to the tent, then to the Pines for careful packing; tours are given, questions are answered, unforeseen problems get solved, and, when it's over, everything has to be cleaned up. In addition to all of this, a great deal of food gets cooked and served. Friday night includes a sit-down meal for 200, the auction itself is preceded by a four-star buffet, and all of the staff and volunteers have to eat as well.

AUCTION VOLUNTEERS: NOT JUST FOR A

It takes about 100 extra pairs of hands to put on the event, and volunteers come from all sectors of the school community. The list begins with the summer's work/study students. They are already familiar with Penland's kitchen and other facilities, they have worked with the staff, and they form a dependable core for the auction crew. Then there are students who had such a good time that they want an excuse to come back, often bringing friends with them; people enrolled in sixth session who accidentally show up a day early; folks who just like to be part of the frenzy; and those who simply arrive unannounced and sign up for a job.

The crew also includes board members, former staff, and good neighbors. This year, the Penland Residents hosted a breakfast for the Auction Patrons, **Edwina Bringle** helped set up the art show, **Cynthia Bringle** and **Doug Sigler** served as relief auctioneers, **Dot Hodges** was on the registration desk, **Mary Ann Scherr** and **Jane Peiser** were both seen wearing aprons, and the list goes on and on. And, of course, the beautiful display of auction art is put together by curator **Jane Kessler**, and the auction itself is run by her husband, **Fred Kessler**. Jane and Fred are part of a dedicated group who have volunteered professional talents year after year and have been essential to the continued success of the event.



Anyone interested in volunteering for the 1995 Auction, which will be held on August 12, should contact Geraldine Plato at 704-765-2359.