

PENLAND LINE

PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFTS • PENLAND NORTH CAROLINA 28765 • FALL 1991

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NORTH CAROLINA HONORS BILL BROWN

N. C. AWARD FOR FINE ARTS

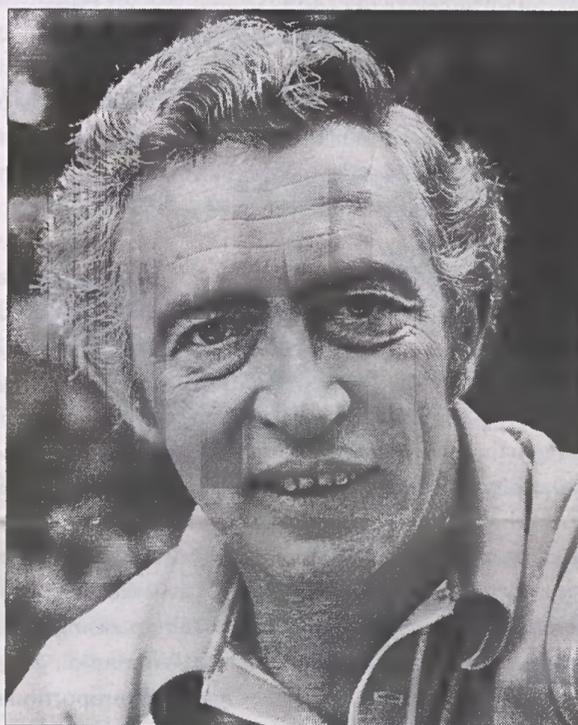
We are pleased to share the news that **Bill Brown**, Director Emeritus of the Penland School of Crafts, has been chosen to receive the 1991 North Carolina Award for Fine Arts. This award is the state's highest honor. It has been given annually since 1961 to citizens who have distinguished themselves in Literature, Public Service, Science and the Fine Arts. Bill will be honored at a reception hosted by Governor and Mrs. James Martin at the Executive Mansion on November 22, 1991. At that time he will receive the North Carolina Award Metal.

Bill was nominated for this award by his many friends and colleagues, the people who have been touched by his unique educational philosophies during more than 21 years as director of the School. Letters of nomination for Bill were received from 160 individual artists and educators from across the United States and from as far away as Japan and Tasmania. Each letter expressed, in personal terms, Bill's tremendous contribution of love, intellect, and spirit, to the people who have made up the contemporary craft movement.

The news of the award was celebrated in Penland on August 11 with a covered dish picnic held at the home of **Linda Darty** and **Terry Smith**. --**Jan Ritter**

Bill's health is failing and the family was especially delighted that the award and the letters in support of it came at a time when Bill is still able to enjoy them. **Jane Brown** has written to express appreciation on behalf of the entire family. In her letter she wrote:

Bill and I together with our immediate family (Billy, Elizabeth and five-year-old Whitney and Jerry and Lori) send our deepest thanks to each one of you for writing such very special letters to the state of North Carolina requesting that Bill be given an official honorary award. ... The heartfelt expressions in each of your incredible letters is truly the highest honor of all!! And the daily honor was in that



each of you came to assist Bill year after year in proving "that education could and should be the greatest thing since sliced bread." We thank you for every day of expertise and caring that you shared with us !! With much love and appreciation we will go to Raleigh to receive the award which is for Bill but also for our entire Penland Family.

BILL BROWN: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

When Miss Lucy Morgan decided to retire in 1962, with the support of the Board of Trustees, she selected Bill Brown to be Penland's second director. A graduate of Cranbrook with both bachelor's and master's degrees in design, Bill had taught in universities and crafts schools and had been assistant director at Haystack.

From the beginning of his tenure, Bill began to invite the finest crafts teachers and practitioners in the world to come to Penland. Under his leadership, these teachers helped to change Penland from a school that taught traditional or folk crafts to one which advanced the professional skills of the artist/craftsman. Although time-honored methods were still taught, there was a shift toward the development of techniques, innova-

tions, design and to foster the marriage of craft with art.

Up until 1962, Penland School had been in full operation only during mild weather, with a very few students resident in the spring and fall. Students paid by the week, or even the day, and came for varying lengths of time to take part in an ongoing curriculum with resident teachers. Applying the traditional mountain system of barter, instructors were never paid, but received room and board and a chance to live and work in beautiful, congenial surroundings.

Bill recognized that the time was right to move away from offering instruction in crafts as a leisure time activity to the study and practice of crafts as a profession. Instead of a pattern of continuous instruction, he established summer sessions of two or three weeks each and added the longer fall and spring concentrations when fewer students could work with greater intensity. He formalized a visiting artists program, established the Penland Residents Program and the Core Student Program and introduced glass, graphics, iron, painting, photography and fine woodworking, as well as the movement program.

During his twenty-one years as director, he expanded the physical facilities and increased the acreage by acquiring the assets of the Appalachian School when it closed after more than a half a century of educating mountain children.

Also during those years, Penland became a magnet for craft artists who came to teach or study and later decided to move to the area and become a part of a crafts community which today numbers over a hundred artists in Mitchell and Yancey counties. The existence of this "Penland Community" is a direct result of the vision and commitment of Bill Brown.

Bill set out to show that education could be fun. He did that and a whole lot more. 