

The Bill Brown Memorial Fund

THOUGH THEIR PLANS ARE NOT YET FINALIZED, IT IS THE FAMILY'S WISH AS IT WAS BILL BROWN'S TO DIRECT ANY MEMORIAL GIFTS TO THE PENLAND RESIDENTS PROGRAM. THE BROWNS ENVISION THE FUND AS A MEANS OF GRANTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTS DURING THEIR STAYS AND WHILE IN TRANSITION AT THE END OF THEIR RESIDENCY. WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED A NUMBER OF GIFTS IN VARYING AMOUNTS TO THE FUND. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE OR KNOW OF OTHERS WHO MIGHT, PLEASE ADDRESS GIFTS TO THE BILL BROWN MEMORIAL FUND IN CARE OF PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFTS, PENLAND, NC 28765.

BILL'S MEMORIAL SERVICE WAS A MOVING TRIBUTE TO A MAN WHOSE GENTLE LEADERSHIP AND CREATIVE SPIRIT CONTINUE TO BE A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION. HIS SON BILL, JR. DESCRIBED THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL DURING THE SERVICE IN THIS WAY, "THE FUND WILL BE USED TO HELP THE RESIDENTS THROUGH THEIR TOUGH MOMENTS. ONE OF THE LAST THINGS BILL SAID TO US ABOUT PENLAND WAS THAT HE WISHED THAT HE COULD JUST SLIP INTO THE BARNS WITHOUT LETTING THEM KNOW WHO HE WAS AND LOOK AROUND, BECAUSE HE FELT THAT THE RESIDENT PROGRAM WAS FULLY HIS CREATION."



The Brown Family during their first weeks at Penland.



THE IMPRINT OF A LIFE

Bill Brown Remembered

Bill Brown, Penland's second director, died on October 24, 1992 after a long illness. Bill guided the school through a remarkable period of transition and growth from 1962 to 1983. He took the vision passed on to him by the school's founder Lucy Morgan, and enlarged and transformed it. While retaining respect for primary materials and traditional techniques, he fostered crafts as a vehicle for personal artistic expression and experimentation. He expanded the curriculum, added the spring and fall concentrations and brought to Penland as instructors the finest craft artists in the country. He established the Penland Residents Program, and encouraged crafts people to settle in the area and to maintain connections with the school. In short, Bill Brown defined for Penland a new mission which continues to this day.

Friends and neighbors gathered together on a beautiful warm fall afternoon in the little white church on Penland's campus to honor and remember him together. Ceramic artist and teacher **Don Reitz** paid him tribute in these words, "He was a great man, he had great vision and gave so much. ... He knew that you had to have more than simply just intellectual pursuit. You had to have love, you had to have soul, you had to be a person."

A photography instructor during Bill Brown's time, **Tom Cox** said, "Bill had an abundance of the two characteristics which I most admire: the first is the courage to do the right thing even when it looks precarious. The second, and greatest quality, is selflessness - the giving of one's self - not being concerned with material things." And from former Penland Resident **Peter Adams** came this tribute, "What Bill taught me was that there is a world out there

that is in a heap of trouble. ... He gave me the courage to go out there and recognize in everyone that there is that golden spark that comes from each and everyone of us to make this a better place."

On November 22, 1991, Bill had received the 1991 North Carolina Award in Fine Arts for his pivotal role in the renaissance of American crafts. He was honored at a reception hosted by Governor and Mrs. James Martin at the Executive Mansion during which he received the Award Medal. He was also honored by the gathering of the many friends who had come to be part of the occasion.

Over 100 letters had been written by students, instructors and former Penland Residents in support of the nomination. These warm tributes with many personal stories of how Penland (and by extension, Bill Brown) had changed lives, are now a part of the Penland archives. The common thread throughout is that Bill and his family created at Penland an environment which nurtured the artist in every person who came. He did this by indirection, by providing the place and the best instructors he could find and then letting people solve their own problems and make their own discoveries. In addition, he and his wife Jane were available to nurture the whole person if that was what was needed. It is not possible to share all those letters, but here are a few excerpts, chosen because they tell illustrative stories.

♦ ♦ ♦

"A former teacher and always a student, I am interested in how education takes place. ... When Bill Brown was director at Penland, an atmosphere prevailed which en-