

An Excellent Exchange Penland News

NEW IRON, PART II: THE GROUNDBREAKING



Ann Hawthorne

Just before lunch was served at Penland's 1999 benefit auction, everyone was invited to a ceremony marking the beginning of construction of the new Penland iron studio. State Senator Kenneth Moore was there along with a number of Penland trustees, architect Frank Harmon, and a group of iron artists.

Leaning against a tree were a dozen new shovels which had been branded with the words, "Penland Iron 1999." Here and there in the crowd were people holding a bizarre assortment of handcrafted interpretations of the shovel form. Ten artists had been asked to create commemorative shovels for the event, and some of them stretched the concept a bit.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bobby Kadis, the chair of the Penland Board of Trustees, is an amiable, immediately likable man. At Penland it wouldn't be surprising to hear someone say, "everybody knows Bobby." While this is not literally true, his twenty years as a Penland student combined with his ten years of service on the board have made him a well known figure at the school.

Bobby has lived his whole life in Goldsboro, North Carolina, where he works in real estate and property development. In 1976, he was supervising the construction of his own house. It was a stressful time and his wife Claudia enrolled him in a clay class at the Goldsboro Arts Council, hoping that it might be a good way for him to relax. He fell in love with clay. Bobby had once visited Penland with nothing more than a casual curiosity. After his first experience with clay, however, he visited again and what he saw here started some wheels turning (actual wheels).

The next summer he came to Penland as a student for the first time. "I had one of those life-changing transformative experiences that so many people have here," he says. He's been back every summer since.

In addition to his passion for clay, Bobby has a passion for the arts in general; not only has he served three terms on the Penland board, he is also on the board of the North Carolina Arts Council. At Penland he has served on a variety of board committees, which was good grounding for his role as chair.

"I did not agree to be chair of the board because I had a par-

ticular agenda in mind," Bobby says. "But I have felt for a long time that we needed to get our physical plant in order. After we received a facilities evaluation report, I became a strong advocate for this. We've got to get the current physical facilities back into good shape and then there are several new facilities that we need up here. So my agenda now is to raise the necessary resources to put the facility in good order to further the program. It's all aimed at what's good for the program."

Bobby feels that this is a fortunate time to chair the Penland board because it is such a strong group of people. "The first strength of this board is its diversity," he says. "We have people from around the country. We have people from the immediate community. We have people who are artists. We have people who are not artists but who have a close association or a deep feeling for Penland. These things come together with an amazing degree of consensus to do what's right for the school. It's been a real pleasure to be the chair of this group. I have also known Jean McLaughlin for several years and I am enjoying working with her for the betterment of Penland."

Another thing Bobby has emphasized as chair is open process. He does not want board members to feel that a small group is running things, and he doesn't want the staff or the larger Penland community to feel that the board is a mysterious entity. He's happy, he says, to discuss the workings of the board with anyone who is interested, because he sees this interest reflecting a love for the school.

Asked if his many years as a Penland student have been valuable to him as a board member, Bobby answered that,

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Board chair Bobby Kadis working at the Penland clay studio.

These shovels, which had been auctioned off the night before, ranged from Jay Burnham-Kidwell's sterling silver salsa shovel (it digs by the spoonful) to Steve Yusko's dysfunctional rubber-handled shovel to a major piece of iron and glass sculpture created for the event by Sally Rogers (it had a shovel embedded in it). Amazing shovels were also contributed by Elizabeth Brim, Jim Cooper, Doug Hendrickson, Jean McLaughlin and Tom Spleth, Nol Putnam, and Chris Winterstein.

Local blacksmith Bea Hensley began the festivities by playing anvil music (see page 2). After remarks by Penland Director Jean McLaughlin, a large group of artists, donors, board members, dignitaries, and the new owners of the ceremonial shovels divided up the tools and stirred up some dust at the corner of the building site. Then everyone had lunch and a few weeks later the bulldozers showed up and went to work.

The proceeds from the sale of ceremonial shovels, along with the money raised at the Friday night patrons' auction and from the sale of iron work in the Saturday auction were designated for the new studio. This brought the school \$65,000 closer to the fundraising goal of 577,300 for the project. Over \$500,000 has been raised for the studio, including a \$150,000 challenge grant from the Meyer Family Foundation, \$150,000 from the 1998 North Carolina General Assembly, and \$25,000 from the James G. Hanes Memorial Fund. The school still needs to raise \$77,000 for the building which will be completed in the summer of 2000. If you would like to help close this gap, contact the Penland School development office.



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Steve Yusko's less-than-functional ceremonial shovel.

while he doesn't feel that this kind of experience is necessary, it is definitely an asset. "There are very few, if any, areas of the school that I am not familiar with. I know what someone is talking about if they talk about a studio assistant and the responsibility of a studio assistant. I know the facilities well. If someone mentions a particular house at Penland, I've probably slept in it."

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Penland Board of Trustees welcomed five new members at the November, 1999 meeting.

Carol Cole Levin (Greensboro, NC) is a painter and sculptor. She is also a collector, a board member of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, and past president of the board of the Weatherspoon Gallery at UNCG. **Cricket Crigler** (Asheville, NC) is an active community volunteer, glass student and mom. She is a past president and board member of the Buncombe County Medical Auxiliary and a frequent and enthusiastic student at Penland.

Nick Joerling (Penland, NC) is a studio potter. He has an MFA from Louisiana State University, has taught workshops throughout the country, and is a former program staff member at Haystack School of Crafts. **Bob Culbertson** (Charlotte, NC) is an insurance executive with a passion for pottery, his new profession. He is on the board of the Tryon Center for Visual Art, a past president of the Arts and Science Council, and has served on the Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board.

Laura Edwards (Chapel Hill, NC) is president of an independent film and video production company. Laura is a trustee of the Kathleen Price Bryan Family Fund, and co-chair of the Woman's Forum of North Carolina, and co-founder of Lillian's List.