



Ann Hawthorne/Dana Moore

Director Jean McLaughlin, artist Tom Spleth, and Millie, photographed as part of the Family Portraits project (see page 6).

PENLAND LINE

Editor/Writer: Robin Dreyer

Layout: Robin Dreyer, Leslie Noell, Kristi Pfeffer

Photographs: Robin Dreyer, Ann Hawthorne, Dana Moore, Evon Streetman

Contributors: Donna Jean Dreyer, Bobby Kadis, Jean McLaughlin, Laurencia Strauss

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Penland School of Crafts is a national center for craft education located in western North Carolina. The school offers classes in ten media, artists' residencies, a community education program, and a craft gallery open to the public. The Penland Line is published twice a year to communicate thoughts about the programs, people, and philosophy of Penland. We invite you to share your news, opinions, and/or photographs with us. E-mail: publications@penland.org.

Penland School of Crafts

P. O. Box 37

Penland, NC 28765-0037

828-765-2359

828-765-7389 fax

e-mail: office@penland.org

web page: <http://penland.org>

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A GATE WITH HISTORY

When Japheth Howard and Alice James were asked to teach the first class in Penland's new iron studio, they wanted it to celebrate the continuum of the program. The Penland iron program has been shaped by the scores of instructors who came and left their mark not only on the skills of their students, but on the walls of the old studio. Samples of iron leaves, hammer heads, class demonstration pieces showing a particular technique, whimsical work, serious work, and pieces commemorating particular events were all part of the funky ambience of the old forge. When a number of blacksmiths came together for the dedication of the new building, everyone was asking, "What is going to happen to the junk?" remembers Japeth.

The artifacts of 25 years of iron classes were the springboard, but the tangible project was a gate which would be attached to one side of the new studio, enclosing an outside area to be used for scrap iron storage. By incorporating the pieces from the old studio as well as some iron oddments solicited from instructors and former students, the new gate would refer to and commemorate the history of the Penland iron program. The instructors designed the structure of the gate so that it provided a framework to contain the memorabilia. In addition, each member of the class created a new piece to fill one of the lyre shapes which are part of the gate's lower structure. By fabricating the gate to include all of the collected work, the class created a veritable library of iron forging techniques. (See page 4.)

Letter From the Director

I've been thinking a lot these days about Penland's relationship to community—or the different ways the people who make up Penland School are connected. Community at Penland means people who have come to the school for any number of reasons—as students, instructors, residents, trustees, staff, participants in auctions and other special events, gallery and campus visitors, and neighbors. I think of our community as being anyone who feels a deep connection to the energy, attitudes, and activities they find here. It is a self-selected group of like-minded souls.

Sometimes when we refer to community, we are talking about several hundred artists and craftspeople, students, instructors, staff and board members, and friends who live in the immediate area. This circle of community joins us for special events like Fred Chappell's poetry reading, the Easter egg hunt, July 4th, and gallery openings. We see them at slides and at show-and-tell. They invite students to their studios, demonstrate for classes, and make valuable program suggestions. They frequent the coffee house, volunteer to help us, and participate in community programming such as Louise Radochonski's drawing sessions this spring or our Local Imagination classes. They are an active and present part of the school.

Other times we are talking about those of you who don't live close enough to visit regularly but who remain tightly connected to us in spirit. Before coming to Penland, I was one of these community members, and the Penland Line was a lifeline connecting me with the values of people and place that I believe are most important in life. Bruce Bangert, a clay resident 38 years ago, visited the school this spring for the first time in over 25 years. After returning home he wrote, "From my years of absence I knew there would be many changes—just how extensive I wasn't sure...wherever I roamed, faces were light with smiles, eyes sparkled with ideas and creativity. It was evident that new thoughts were running wild in the air..." Each year, among our students we have about 600 returning faces and 600 people who are just joining our community. From the evaluations and letters we receive, Bruce's observation is not isolated. Penland remains just that place that nurtures, stimulates, challenges, and supports. Together, these communities of Penland create an impressive personal and professional network.

Jack Troy was here for several weeks as one of the instructors in the spring clay class. After he left, he sent a letter to his students detailing, with carefully crafted irony, his suggestions for the problems he encountered while returning to normal life. I'll close with a few excerpts from his letter:

Problem: Multiple-Entrée Deprivation Syndrome. The tendency to say or think, "Isn't there anything else to eat?" when you sit down to a meal you have prepared for your self.

Solution: Be grateful that you didn't have to stand in line and make quick decisions about how to arrange food on your plate according to relative heat values as well as color and texture so that when you sit down with other artists your composition won't be considered boorish or lacking in originality.

Problem: Mountain Vista Discontinuation Malaise. The real or imagined perception that living in sight of complex land-forms may have been pleasurable.

Solution: Remember that poets are often calling our attention to the ways in which mountains "loom threateningly," and are "menacing," or "perilous." The more pragmatic remind us that people who live in the mountains get worse mileage than those who drive on flat terrain.

Problem: Dali's Melting-Clock Privation. The seductive disinclination to accept the passage of time as measured by conventional clocks.

Solution: Do not read the paragraph in the last chapter of Thoreau's *Walden* that begins, "There was an artist in the city of Kauroo who was disposed to strive after perfection." It will only intensify your wish for a clock that drips and oozes the time as it passes while you make art—as opposed to the kind that ticks and tocks when you do your taxes. On the other hand, don't daydream when the light turns green.

Problem: Humane Studio Environment Forfeiture. The occasional recollection that working among similarly committed persons is in itself an incentive to personal growth in one's chosen medium.

Solution: Certification in this challenging area may be delayed, incremental, and resistant to quantification. The world as we know it simply isn't like Penland, and never will be, completely. There is no better reason to have gone there; none better to lure you back. Maybe the best way to adapt to a Penland-Free Zone is to bring the spirit of the place any way you can, to where it's needed, and then Penland will have been a success and you'll never be quite as far away as you think.

We hope that you will visit often, stay in touch, and always be a part of our community.

Jean W. McLaughlin, Director



Robin Dreyer

Alice James and Japheth Howard (left) with the fall iron class and their gate.