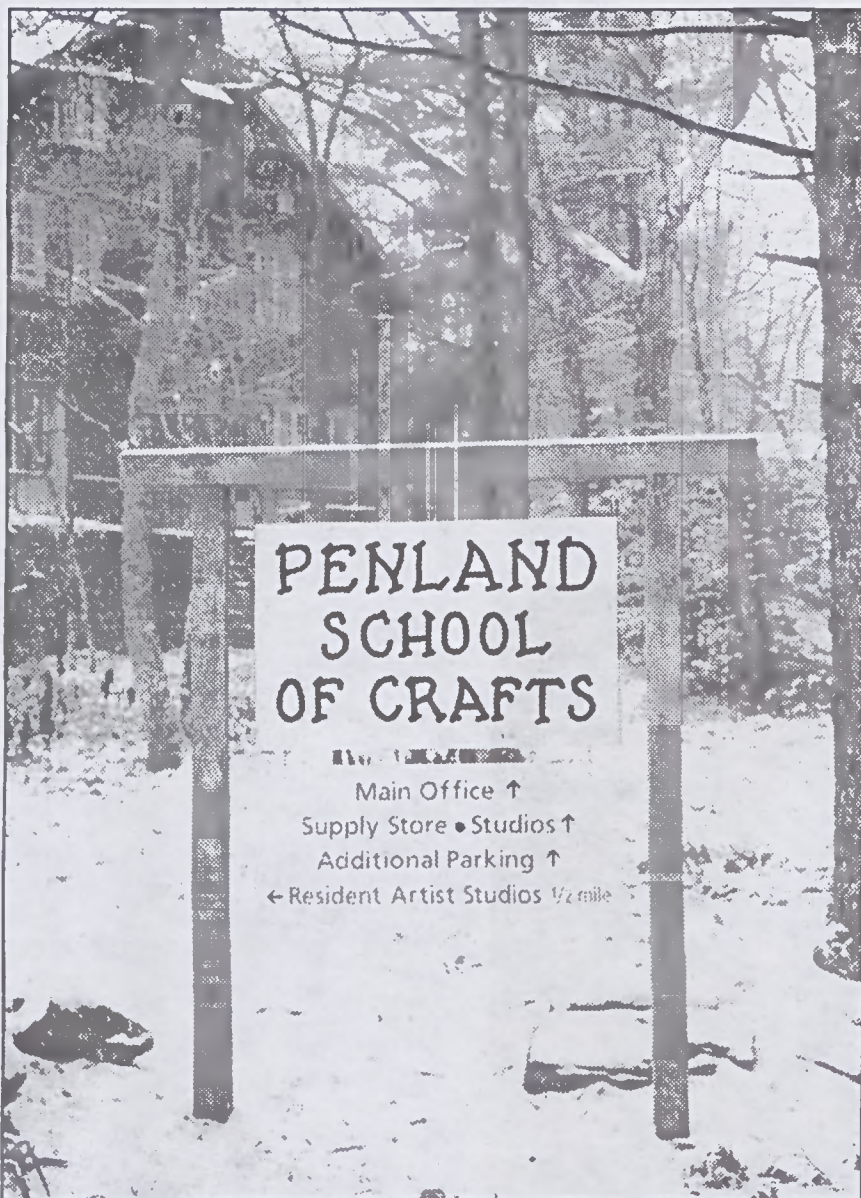


Robin Dreyer



Old or new? Penland has several new signs to help first-time visitors find their way around. The top section of this sign (and of several of the others) was carefully copied from one of the old signs that were located at either end of Penland Road. The new ones were made by George Pittman whose uncle made the originals

PENLAND LINE

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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

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Letter From the Director

Snow has come to Penland several times already this winter—usually in giant flakes, sometimes briefly, sometimes for hours. It doesn't stay with us for long, but it seems to create extra time to pause, to smile, to walk with care. It's been a good winter for reflection.

This *Penland Line* opens with a story about families who have shared Penland—at the same time and across the years. The examples in this story stand in for many spouses, sisters, brothers, parents, and children who find that Penland is a good way to extend how they know each other. We could also have written just as much about people who find or extend their "families" here, as special bonds are made through sharing classes, rooms, meals, quiet moments, and even pot washing in the kitchen. It is always a joy to see unusual friendships emerge between the many and varied people who find their way here.

I mentioned all this to potter Nick Joerling, who lives just down the road, and he recalled his last time teaching at Penland when his brother Michael was also teaching in the wood studio, his brother David was the studio assistant in the painting class, his sister-in-law Sarah was taking the papermaking class, and a number of the other instructors were long-time friends. "Late in the session," he said, "we threw ourselves an elegant dinner at Long House—about sixteen people seated at one long table, dressed up, with waiters and printed menus."

We've seen a few *new* families created at Penland this year. Many car loads made the trip to Raleigh in mid-summer to celebrate the wedding of recent core student Meredith Brickell and frequent student Ray Duffy. The cars ran in the other direction this fall when Kara Ikenberry and Ronan Peterson were married on the Penland knoll. Both Kara and Ronan have been core students and staff members, and the Penland Kitchen Alumni All-Star Team put on a memorable spread for the reception. Maintenance man and horse wrangler Chuck Nelson invited "the whole darn posse" to the knoll for his wedding to Angel Rannazzisi in October. It was a sight to behold as they crested the hill riding horses in their wedding finery.

Also in this issue we note the passing of industrial designer Sam Scherr, the beloved husband of metalsmith and long-time Penland instructor Mary Ann Scherr. The Scherrs and their children Randy, Sydney and Scott made Penland an important part of their lives. Sam and the children sometimes visited Mary Ann when she was teaching, and Sydney (also a metalsmith) has been an instructor here as well.

Last fall, I visited Sam's studio, and on the wall was the following quote, which Mary Ann said was his favorite:

We pay a heavy price for our fear of failure. It is a powerful obstacle to growth. It assures the progressive narrowing of the personality and prevents exploration and experimentation. There is no learning without some difficulty and fumbling. If you want to keep on learning, you must keep on risking failure—all your life. —John W. Gardner.

This makes me think of the many ways every day that I, as a student or as Penland's director, hurdle some obstacle and experience the thrill of exploration or the fear of stumbling; it seems like an elegant description of why Penland exists: so that people can keep on risking and learning throughout their lives.

The quote from John Gardner was also part of my conversation with Nick Joerling, and he sent me back a note, written early one morning, ruminating on the relationship between failure and exploration. I'll share some his thoughts here.

"I remember hearing the sculptor Jun Kaneko speak about a realization in his life," Nick wrote. "He said that for his first fifteen years of working in clay, everytime he was about to unload a kiln, he would wheel a dumpster up next to it and most of what would come out he would immediately toss into the trash. It took him fifteen years to see that he was tossing away the best part of who he was, and discarding things that were packed with valuable information. Because he was calling them failures, he was blind to what they offered.

"It's hard to think of the word failure without other words—expectation, intention—attached to it. Those words then evoke their opposites (or partners)—chance, surprise, the unforeseen. At least the way we are using it (coming from the Gardner quote) in an artistic context, failure seems to have built into it a sense of endgaming, perhaps of ego and control.

"Artistically, instead of *intention/expectation* holding *making* by the lapels, it's better to have *intention/expectation* dancing with *making* and being open to *chance and surprise* (reworded from failure) cutting in. To rethink failure is to de-emphasize control. It makes for a less military dance."

Nick's note concluded with this thought: "I'm also reminded, as I read the phrase 'fear of failure' in the Gardner quote, of what I think was Paulus Berensohn's observation that within the word fear is the word ear, meaning that there's probably much there to be listened to."

So I want to thank Sam for his lifetime of experimenting and exploring, Nick for his wise words, and each of you for being a part of the Penland family.

—Jean W. McLaughlin, Director



Friends and family gathered on the Penland knoll for the wedding of Kara Ikenberry and Ronan Peterson. Kara has been a core student and housekeeping coordinator. Ronan has worked in the Penland kitchen and gallery in addition to his two years in the core program.