



COUNTRY-FRIED

fellowship

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOE LINK

Members in this country church bring the community together with their annual dinner—and a good time was had by all.

It's 3:30 on a Friday afternoon, late in the summer, and in just 3 hours some 2,000 people in the community of Mint Hill, N.C., will be filling their plates here at the Shiloh True Light Church of Christ annual fish fry. Minister Mike McGee, wearing a blue apron, is unusually calm, stirring his large pot of catfish stew on the porch of the church community center.

He seems peaceful, actually, which makes no sense considering all that still has to be done—and his one very big problem. His two large fish fryers aren't working. He can't find their gas lines and regulators.

There are other fryers lined up on the porch, probably two

dozen or more, but they look like toys compared to Mike's two enormous tanks. "If I don't get these two cookers working, I'm in big, big trouble." And yet he smiles when he says the words.

Only four or five other men are helping at this point, one of whom is Joey Dullin, who has just arrived on an emergency call to rig something up. "He's my heating and cooling guy," says Mike. Joey surveys the situation, still wondering how he's going to get the work done under such a tight deadline. "No pressure?" Mike asks with a smile. Joey looks up and deadpans, "No pressure."

When cousins Kendall and Brennan Huntley walk by, Mike

(Above) It's a hot job standing over scalding oil. Mike McGee (in blue apron) works with Todd Clanton (left) and Len Bailes to move fish to hungry customers.