

## Reece...continued from page 1A

hopefully, people will have an opportunity to come and visit. They'll get a sense of not only what Byron Herbert Reece was about, and his great works in the literary world, they'll get a sense of what life was like in the North Georgia Mountains."

Commissioner Kendall said looking around the Heritage Center brought back memories. He remembered days when the Reece family mule plowed the fields, of course with Hub Reece trailing the plow. He remembered rows of high corn whipped by the wind along the Wolf Creek bottoms. "Indeed, this brings back memories," Commissioner Kendall said.

Commissioner Paris said many thanks go to many people for helping make the project a reality. "I think we got it right," he said. "This truly preserves the heritage of the Appalachian lifestyle." Set along the sterling waters of Wolf Creek, the historic enclave is a tribute to the man, his family and Appalachia.

Hub Reece, who died at the age of 40, farmed, worked and cultivated the land in the Wolf Creek bottoms. He spent his free time reading the works of literary greats, and writing prose about the Mountain way of life.

During his short-lived career, Hub Reece, who attended, but did not graduate from Young Harris College, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, earned two Guggenheim awards, and served as writer-in-residence at UCLA, Atlanta's Emory University, and Young Harris College in Towns County.

In his lifetime, Reece had his work published in the local newspaper, and later went on to compose four books of poetry and two fiction novels. His work, which included *Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems*, was highly acclaimed, earning esteemed literary praise and national attention. Other works included novels, *Better a Dinner of Herbs*, and *The Hawk and the Sun*. Hundreds of unpublished



**Bettie Sellers**

Hub Reece poems still exist today, Kay said.

Atlanta Constitution Executive Editor and later Publisher Ralph McGill once said that Reece was "one of the really great poets of our time, and one to stand with those of any other time."

Hub Reece was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his 1950 work entitled *Bow Down in Jericho*.

By January 1951, Hub Reece had been recognized on the national scene in a magazine article published in *Newsweek*. It was around this time that Hub Reece was befriended by McGill. The two developed a strong friendship and McGill became a lifetime advocate of Hub Reece's work. Saturday, and eventually Sunday, was James Mathis Sr.'s vision of a legacy to the Mountain poet and his life and writings that literally came to life. All the time by James Mathis' side was his beloved wife Frances, who shared his dream.

"Frances and James managed Goose Creek and that's how they became friends with the Reece family," Fleming Weaver said.

"The rest is history as they say."

James Mathis had the vision to begin purchasing items that belonged to Reece, all the while envisioning a heritage center that detailed the life and works of the man. W.R. Berry owns the 1947 tractor used by Hub Reece on his farm. W.C. Nelson of Nelson Tractor restored the farm tool's mechanics, while still leaving it in a rustic state. Berry continues to loan the tractor to the Farm and Heritage Center.

Weaver, one of the driving forces behind the project acknowledged Mathis' contributions. He also said the Reece Farm and Heritage Center was the Mountain way of reaching out and preserving the legacy of Byron Herbert Reece.

Reaching out indeed. The Heritage Center includes a completely restored main barn, for agricultural exhibits and the Hub Reece Gallery and Theatre. In addition, the Farm's corn crib has been restored, and a smoke house, chicken coop, and spring house have been built.

The Reece family house also has under gone a complete renovation, mak-



**Frances Mathis**

ing it a centerpiece Welcome Center for the Farm and Heritage Center. The Center also houses a gift shop, rest room facilities, Reece Family Museum, office and meeting space, and storage areas. The Center also includes numerous Reece Farm exhibits.

Meanwhile, a beautiful pedestrian bridge crosses Wolf Creek, joining the North and South portions of the 9.3 acres of property. Also, a 2,620 square foot pavilion is capable of accommodating approximately 200 people for meetings or 150 for meals.

Most importantly, the Hub Reece writing studio was restored and is located along the Poetry Trail.



**John Kay presents Fleming Weaver with plaque**



**Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris**



**The Byron Herbert Reece Society celebrates the opening of the Reece Farm and Heritage Center with friends and the Blairsville-Union Chamber of Commerce**  
Photo/Charles Duncan

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## Open House...continued from page 1A

hot dogs and hamburgers to go around. It's always a good feeling to see this much local support."

For the most part, the firefighters are just like you and I with one exception. They've gone through hours of intensive training to learn how to prevent a disaster in their community. They've dedicated themselves to public service because they want to make a difference in their community.

Chief Worden said that one of the most important things offered at the Open House is a tour through the Fire Safety House.

The Fire Safety house is a mobile educational trailer used to teach young children about fire safety and allows them to practice escaping from a simulated house fire. The Fire Safety House uses electronically operated smoke detectors and a non-toxic smoke in a simulated bedroom to create a realistic environment where children can practice escaping from a house in the event of a fire. Additional features of the Fire Safety House is to teach kitchen safety, home heating safety and reporting an emergency.

Meanwhile, over at Fire Station 10 behind Circle K, they ran out of food at noon as a record crowd came to share a meal and enjoy a silent auction of items that included an autographed photo of John Wayne.

The Rev. Bethel Buchanan was one of the lucky attendees to walk away with a door prize. First Lt. Jack Thompson said the event at Fire Station 3 was a rousing success. There was plenty of water melon and sweets to go around after the food disappeared.

Chief Worden said that he couldn't have asked for better weather or a better turnout.

"The biggest part of open house is education,"



**Friends, family and Union County residents gather at Fire Station 10 for the Annual Open House**  
Photo/Gerald Potts

Chief Worden said. "It's teaching people who we are, where we are and gives us a chance to show them what

their donations buy. It also gives them a chance to identify with their firefighters up close and in person."